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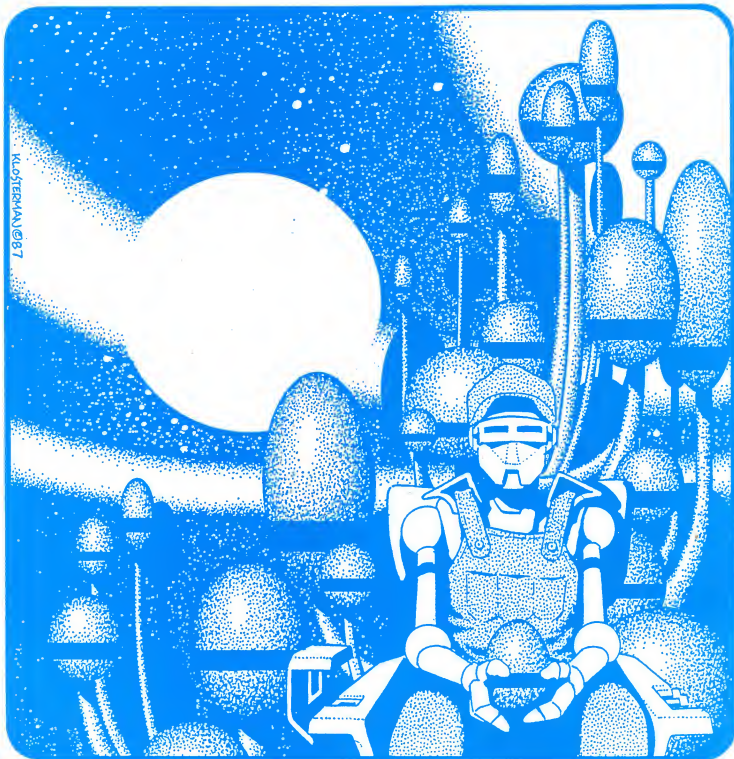
Fall
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THRUST

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No. 28

SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY REVIEW



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IMPULSE



editorial by Doug Fratz

Welcome to **THRUST** - Science Fiction & Fantasy Review 28, the latest issue of what appears to be a dying breed: the science fiction and fantasy review magazine. But more on that later.

The Issue At Hand: This issue begins with an alternative view on cyberpunk by SF and fantasy author Lawrence Watt-Evans, whose most recent books include *The Misenchanted Sword* (Del Rey, 1985) and *Shining Steel* (Avon, 1986). Lawrence is neither pro- nor anti-cyberpunk, but takes some strong middle-of-the-road positions that I suspect may mirror the views of many **THRUST** readers. (Or then maybe not--maybe EVERYONE will disagree. Only the letters column knows for sure.)

Our interview this issue is with the late Walter Tevis. Conducted in 1982, only months before his death in 1983, the interview provides a rare inside look at one of the most successful (if not the most prolific) writers of SF to come from the mainstream. I have been trying to get this interview into the last few issues, and am pleased indeed to have finally succeeded.

I am also pleased to feature this issue a major article on feminism in fantasy and science fiction by Janrae Frank. I believe that this is the first article on the topic in many years to appear in a wide-circulation SF review magazine, although feminism in SF has been a topic of continuous (and sometimes heated) discussions in various fanzines, including some specifically devoted to the subject.

Darrell Schweitzer--our only regular columnist to make this issue's deadline--looks at the current crop of SF films, which doesn't really include much SF at all, with the exception of the TV premiere of *Max Headroom*. (It's amazing to consider that with *Headroom* on TV, and with various cinematic projects in the works, virtually everyone will know the motifs of cyberpunk, but only a few thousands of us will have heard of the TERM cyberpunk. . . . Will the mundane press come up with its own term?) Also featured this issue is Part 5 of Marvin Kaye's highly philosophical series of articles on the theme of immortality.

Both the book reviews section and the letters column are greatly expanded this issue, and I hope to maintain them as key elements of **THRUST**. I am putting a lot of effort, with help from several other staff members, into developing our book reviews into the field's prominent forum for SF book reviews and criticism. The demise of **FANTASY REVIEW** will create an even greater dearth of good, solid SF criticism, and provides even more impetus to our task.

This issue got caught up in quite a few delays, and will be going to press several weeks late. The well-oiled machine still needs a little more tuning. . . .

Where Have All the Columnists Gone?: This issue hits an all-time low for number of regular **THRUST** columnists featured--one--but an all-time high for notable excuses for missing the deadline. Charles Platt had just completed a lengthy column on censorship, but quickly lost it when his hard disk crashed on his PC. (He promises to reconstruct his work by next issue.) Dick Geis had hoped to appear again this issue, but has developed increasing arthritic problems which have forced him to curtail his writing, as well as discontinue publishing **CONTOVERSY IN REVIEW**. Dave Bischoff has been out in the wilds of the Los Angeles area writing children's TV shows for fun and profit. John Shirley is busy reviewing all of the submissions to last issue's Alternative Convention Programming Contest, the results of which he will be announcing next issue. (There is still time to submit your entry and try to win those fabulous prizes, but hurry! **Deadline for entries is October 15, 1987!**) Ted White is still working on writing up his views on **STARDATE**'s demise. As for George Alec Efinger's fabled return, I think that falls in the category of Real Soon Now. . . .

In the meantime, **THRUST**'s readers can find some of our columnists in other sources. Dick Geis would LOVE to sell you some back issues to his long-time magazine, **SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW**; write Dick at P.O. Box 11408, Portland, OR 97211, for further details. Charles Platt publishes **REM**, a fascinating but irrelevant little periodical that can be obtained for \$1.50 per issue from Charles at 9 Patchin Place, New York, NY 10010. (8 issues of **REM** have appeared to date. Before that, Charles published the equally-controversial **PATCHIN REVIEW**.) Steve Brown and former **THRUST** art director Dan Steffan have teamed up (with help from several other current **THRUST** staffers) to start a new SF review magazine, **SF EYE**. The 1st issue was out last April, and the 2nd also will be out by the time you read this. A sample copy is \$3.00 from Box 3105, Washington, DC 20000.

Speaking of **REM** and **SF EYE**, a bit of a controversy is now raging over a quite negative review of the 1st issue of **SF EYE** published in **REM** 8 under the byline, "Sue Denim." The controversy occurred because "Sue Denim" is the not-so-secret pseudonym used by Lew Shiner (primarily in **Bruce Sterling's** **CHEAP TRUTH**), but Lew did NOT write that review. Platt followed up **REM** 8 with a full-page clarification stating his side of what happened. We may never be sure who wrote that review. . . . but on the upside, **SF EYE** is getting a lot of publicity. (It has occurred to me that I could claim to have written it and get both of our magazines more publicity. . . . but, no, that just doesn't fit my style. . . .)

Another One Bites the Dust: The past year has been hard on review magazines in the SF field. By now I'm sure that you all have heard that Meckler Corporation, a professional publisher that only just recently bought **FANTASY REVIEW**, has pulled the plug on Bob Collins and crew, at least in terms of publishing a monthly magazine. (Instead, they plan an annual hardcover book of reviews and articles.) That leaves **THRUST** and new-kid-on-the-block **SF EYE** as the only SF&F review semi-prozines extant, joining monthly news magazines **LOCUS** and **SF CHRONICLE**.

I am sorry to see **FANTASY REVIEW** go, although I must say I am not really very surprised at Meckler's decision--only that they made it so soon. Meckler is in the publishing business to make healthy profits on specialized publications, and--I know all too well--high profits from a review magazine in the SF field are just not achievable. Only "low overhead" operations, like **THRUST**, **LOCUS** and **SFC**, continue to thrive.

The Hugos: By the time you read this, the results of this year's Hugo Awards will have been announced, but as I am writing this, that event remains several weeks (and 3000 miles) away. (The only member of **THRUST**'s staff who will be attending this year's Worldcon is Steve Brown, where he will have the honor of residing in William Gibson's suite.) Nevertheless, I plan to comment here and now on what I think might or should have happened in Brighton at Conspiracy.

The novel Hugo seems likely to go to *Card's Speaker of the Dead*, the Nebula winner, although Gibson's apparently underrated *Count Zero* may have a chance. (I say apparently underrated because it has gotten nowhere near the attention *Neuromancer* did, despite being at least as good--just very similar. Has *SF* really tired of Gibson's milieu so soon?) Bob Shaw's *The Ragged Astronaut* may just win, however. If British fans block-vote, it will be interesting to see. Shaw's novel appeared too late in the U.S. for American fan consideration.

The big controversy this year seems destined NOT to be over who wins the Hugo, however, but over how L. Ron Hubbard's **Black Genesis** made the final ballot. Rumors of conspiracy are bound to proliferate, but I think that it is likely that Bridge's very successful marketing efforts have simply found significant support in fandom's rank-and-file for Hubbard's traditional SF adventures.

The novella award seems destined for Lucius Shepard's "R&R". I found it interesting that the readers of **IASFM** preferred another nominee, Connie Willis's "Spice Pogrom". In the magazine's reader awards. (Notice that **IASFM** dominated the 1986 novella category, with 4 of 5 nominees. Very impressive.)

In the novelette category, the Nebula winner (Kate Wilhelm's "The Girl Who Fell into the Sky") wasn't even nominated. I think the **INTERZONE** publication of Gibson's "The Winter Market" makes it a likely winner. David Brin's "Thor Meets Captain America" (the **LOCUS** Poll winner) may have had a better chance to win with a less frivolous title.

I was mildly surprised that Greg Bear's "Tangents" won a Nebula, but the SF short stories of 1986 included many good ones, but few if any great ones. I think Asimov's "Robot

-----continued on page 30

CYBER YES, PUNK NO

Lawrence Watt-Evans



I've been watching in silence for months now as the fuss about "cyberpunk" has gone on and on, endlessly and pointlessly. I'm tired of it. Various writers and speakers have spoken out on one side or the other, throwing around all manner of accusation and insult, to very little real effect.

Can we please just get this settled and all shut up?

In hopes of bringing about such a happy resolution, and also of getting my own two cents in, I'd like to make some comments of my own, as a person with no particular axe to grind, and with sympathy for both sides.

What we're talking about here, really, isn't any great social movement, no revelation from the gods; it's just a style of writing science fiction, just words on paper. Surely, more than 90% of the population of the U.S. has never heard of cyberpunk.

In our little corner of literature, though, it does seem to be stirring up a fuss. Why?

That's not something I can answer in a

sentence. To begin with, nobody has really produced a satisfactory definition of "cyberpunk"; definitions have been offered, often not very coherently, but these remain unsatisfactory in that none has been widely accepted. In fact, I've never seen anyone use anyone else's definition. Writers of articles don't even seem to agree on exactly who does and doesn't write the stuff. William Gibson is generally acknowledged to be someone who does; so are Bruce Sterling and Lewis Shiner, and John Shirley has made it plain that he considers himself part of the group. Beyond that hard core, one starts to hear argument.

So just what makes something "cyberpunk?"

Well, I haven't read everything that bears the label, but from what I have read, I can point out two elements that seem to me to be the basics.

First is the idea of increasing technological and sociological complexity. Cyberpunk gets

about as far away from the old suggestion of one fantastic element added to the everyday world as is possible. The cyberpunk writers are among the very few SF writers to have really accepted, and incorporated into their work, the exponential growth of technology and communication. In addition to explicit descriptions of this hot new technology, cyberpunk is generally written in a fast-moving, jargon-laced style to reflect the complexity and speed of the society being described.

Second is an anti-authority stance, an emphasis on what I call "outlaw youth," reflected in characterization and style.

We'll come back to that second element later, but now I'd like to address the first one at length.

For the last century or two, technology has been growing exponentially, and in virtually every area at once. New developments lead to more new developments, not one for one, but in multiple branchings and hybridizations. Furthermore, the new developments are getting out into the marketplace faster and faster, and being accepted by the public faster and faster.

Inevitably, they'll continue to do so, at an ever-faster pace.

Consider, for example, sound recording. Edison invented the phonograph in 1877, and disks came along ten years later. The gadget was electrified in 1925. The long-playing record arrived in 1948. I don't have exact dates, but the wire recorder and dictaphone came along somewhere in the middle of the twentieth century, as well. Hi-fi and stereo made the scene in the fifties, as did the tape recorder.

So sound recording has been around for one hundred and ten years. In the first half of that period it got as far as the electric gramophone. In the next quarter, up through 1960, it got as far as the hi-fi stereo LP, and the real-to-real tape recorder.

And in the last quarter, we've gotten cassette tapes, 8-tracks, compact disc, digital audio, true binaural recording, flexi-disks, the Walkman, and on and on.

Is there any reason to think that this will slow down?

Is there any reason to think that the rate of change won't continue to increase?

If this is true in sound recording, isn't it also true in data processing, biotechnology, high-energy physics, and every other field?

The usual argument against continued growth of technology is that it can't go on forever, that sooner or later everything will have been invented.

This is, frankly, garbage. It's a failure of the imagination, one that's distressingly common, and one that's been around for a long time. The head of the U.S. Patent Office argued for closing his bureau down on the grounds that everything had been invented—a hundred and fifty years ago.

The same argument has been made over and over again, and it's always been wrong. The world is never going to stop changing, and the rate of change is probably never going to slow down. Thinking otherwise is burying one's head in the sand.

Judging by the last few decades, the area of technology that's likely to increase the fastest and with the greatest effect in the years ahead is communications and information processing. That means that in the next few decades we can expect to see a world of constantly-changing, constantly-advancing

technology, of greatly-increased access to vast amounts of information, of cross-cultural hybridizing brought on by enhanced communication. New developments will arrive faster than they can be absorbed. Language will change to reflect the times, just as it always has.

The cyberpunks seem to know this; most "mainstream" SF writers don't.

In THRU25, John Shirley accused the science fiction community (or at least those portions of it that object to cyberpunk) of cowardice. I think he may be right, though perhaps not in the way he meant it—my own guess would be not cowardice, but laziness, or an inability to imagine well enough. It's not a fear of technology or the future that's responsible, it's fear of doing unnecessary work.

Too many SF stories set in the future present a future that's much too simple. Their writers fail to create a world as complex as our own, when in all probability any future society will be far more complex. Stories that present a world of starships and galactic empires, but which never mention genetic engineering, are absurd. Stories that involve clones but never mention sentient computers are ill-conceived. Stories set on distant planets where the characters all have European names are almost offensive. We aren't going to have spaceships with vacuum tubes and slide rules, and we laugh at those stories of forty years ago that describe them, but we go on making equally foolish mistakes.

You can find stories that deal with genetic engineering, stories that deal with computerized neurosurgery, stories that deal with sentient computers, stories that deal with cyborgs, with starships, with space colonies, with overpopulation, with ecological disaster, with microengineering, with mass media taken to extremes far beyond anything we've seen yet, with all sorts of drastic cultural and political changes brought about by these new technologies, but only the cyberpunks seem to realize that we're going to have all of these at once, and a lot sooner than we think—probably within either our own lifetimes or the lives of our children. Only the cyberpunks seem to see that these will all arrive before we're ready for them, just as every other technology has, because the majority of the population refuses to think about such things until they're already here.

Fifty years ago spaceships and nuclear weapons were described in science fiction, and were seen as real possibilities by most scientists, but the population at large dismissed them as "Buck Rogers stuff," only to wake up in 1945 to find Hiroshima going, and again in 1957 to hear Sputnik beeping. Today's politicians are still struggling with those, and don't have time to worry about genetic engineering or space colonies. Hell, they're still working on some of the same problems that troubled the pharaohs!

So the gleaming cities of the pulps aren't going to happen. New technologies are going to be rammed down the throats of our present societies, and will undoubtedly bend them out of shape. We'll have robot police chasing junkies from brownstones, junkies hooked not on heroin, but on the waste products of custom-bred symbiotic organisms living in their bloodstreams; we'll have competency hearings for computers; we'll have desperate attempts to use artificial organisms to restore damaged ecosystems; and we'll have it all at once, within the next century, while most

people are still watching reruns of Star Trek and Gilligan's Island (probably in computer-synthesized 3-D) and bitching about how the union let them down when the GM plant closed, no more concerned about what's really happening to the world than most people are now.

I think that the cyberpunks are at least making a stab at depicting this sort of future, which is more than most SF writers are doing. And I think that, in doing so, they're alienating some readers who don't want to deal with such complexity.

Some readers are, of course, free to read what they please, but attacking cyberpunk for showing them uncomfortable truths isn't going to do anybody any good, especially not the SF field as a whole. I have no sympathy with any attacks made on that basis.

However, this doesn't mean I'm a full-fledged supporter of cyberpunk, because I'm not. Some of it is wonderful stuff, but some isn't. When it isn't, it's generally not the "hot tech" aspects I dislike. There's that second characteristic of cyberpunk, as well—the "punk" part.

It's been said repeatedly that cyberpunk is not really punk. That's largely true, it's not. However, there is an emphasis on "outlaw youth," as I said—it's not everywhere, but it's there. It seems to derive from the argument that young people will be at the forefront of the ongoing technological revolution, because they will have grown up with it, and because the young are generally more receptive to change, not having had time to settle into fixed ruts—and the essence of the future that the cyberpunks foresee is a constant state of change.

I think that this emphasis is a mistake.

Oh, sure, the young will be important in the future, just as they've always been, but there's no reason to think that they'll dominate society any more than they have in the past. There have been times when American culture fixated on youth, notably the 1920s and 1960s, and such times may happen again if the demographics cooperate, but that doesn't make it necessary to write stories of outlaw youth. And there's a good reason not to focus on rebellious young men (remarkably few cyberpunk stories seem to have a female as the central protagonist).

It makes it very hard to take the stuff seriously.

Why? Because young men, full of anger and rebellion and new ideas, almost always turn out to be wrong. They oversimplify problems, present solutions that can't work—if they have solutions at all. They think they're the new, improved human race, but after a few years they inevitably wind up much like the old version.

It's happened throughout recorded history, from the French Revolution to the hippies. Youth movements often do have some lasting effect—the Bourbons aren't on the throne these days, and pop music will never again be what it was before 1967—but the Age of Aquarius has yet to arrive.

Furthermore, science fiction has a very bad track record with predictions based on the culture of the young, and although the cyberpunks argue that they're different, it's hard to believe them.

Go back through the magazines of the late '60s, and you'll find innumerable stories extending the counterculture/establishment conflict into the future, all of them now ludicrous. It's hard to convince people that

cyberpunk stories of outlaw youth will have any more lasting value than such predecessors as Logan's Run.

Youthful energy, anger, and adaptability are valuable, but so are the experience and calm that come with age. A fresh viewpoint is not necessarily better than historical perspective. I'd be much happier with the cyberpunks if they avoided cliché characters as assiduously as they avoid cliché settings.

For example, the corporate villain. Gregory Benford objected to the frequent use of corporations as "the root of all evil." John Shirley countered that corporations are often ruthless and destructive, and are probably going to get more powerful.

I think Shirley missed the point. It's not as important whether or not it's true, as whether it's interesting. It's storytelling that most readers are concerned with, not ideology. Corporations have been a standard villain for twenty years now, flogged to death by TV, movies, books, stories, everywhere. The corporation as villain has gotten boring. It's a cliché. Readers don't see such stories as warnings about the real world any more; they just tune out the propaganda, because they've heard it all before, over and over. The ruthless corporate exploiter is a mere cartoon now, like the Hollywood Nazi, his predecessor as a standard villain.

This is not to say that corporate villains can't work, merely that because they've been overused, they need to be handled more carefully. In Hollywood, nobody ever needs to give a Nazi any motivation; wearing an SS uniform is all the motivation a character needs to be capable of villainy. The result is cardboard. But a writer can still produce a real and frightening Nazi villain if he takes the time and trouble to explore why an ordinary man is wearing an SS uniform in the first place.

Similarly, too many writers present corporations as villains without any explanation or justification. Corporations are made up of people, after all, and each individual has some reason for whatever part he or she plays in corporate evil. Too often, in cyberpunk work as on TV, they're presented as faceless automatons or comic-book villains, evil for the sake of evil.

I don't insist on likeable characters. I don't have anything against decadence. But I do want real characters, and I get tired of seeing the same thing over and over—the outcast young loner, the greedy corporation, the decadent billionaire.

Furthermore, I balk at the idea that youth will determine the future, and I don't believe for a moment that any currently-fashionable trend among the young will persist for more than a few years. Weird hair colors, for example. The whole point of youthful fashion is to be new and different, and, if possible, outrageous. If it's been done before, why bother?

John Shirley says, "The difference between standard SF culture and cyberpunk SF culture is to some degree tribal." That's exactly the problem. The essence of a tribe is to exclude outsiders, to divide the world into "us" and "them," and an awful lot of people feel that the cyberpunks are doing exactly that. It's not a good way to get a message across, to attract readers, or to endear oneself to critics. People resent being shut out.

The result is attacks on the genre, and an impression that the cyberpunks are mostly preaching to the converted.

Calling it tribal also brings to mind, at least for me, the "hippie tribes" of twenty years ago. Shirley says his "new tribe...is defined and inspired by an openness to a new influx of spontaneous cultural data." In *THRUST* 26, he says that some people "just don't get it."

This sounds amazingly like the counterculture claims to be a new tribe defined and inspired by an openness to love and spirituality that Mr. Establishment just didn't dig. The difference is that the hippies were anti-technology, while the cyberpunks are immersed in technology; the attitudes are the same.

The overall effect is that it's all youthful posturing that these people will outgrow in a few years, just as the hippies turned into yuppies. The issuing of manifestos, challenges, and all the other hype only serves to reinforce this impression.

And that's a shame, because cyberpunk is important in its high-speed view of a

hypercomplex, hot-tech future. It's just the characters the cyberpunks focus on that turn many people off.

The parody "cyberprep movement" actually has a point (though its founders may not agree with me on this,) in that the world is almost certainly not going to be run by punks twenty years from now; the preppies will be there, too, and not just as faceless corporate puppets. They'll be manipulating all that hot tech, too; there are more hackers and computer criminals coming out of the Ivy League than off the streets. It'll probably be the people with money and education who get out into space first.

The cyberpunks are important, and they ought to be setting new science-fictional standards with their understanding of what lies ahead, but to some extent they're sabotaging themselves with their "punk" emphasis on outlaw youth, hiding their hard edge under the adolescent flash. □

interzone

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

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Garry Kilworth: "Dop*elg*an*er"
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WALTER TEVIS



PHOTO BY SUE DRISKELL

INTERVIEW by David Pettus

Walter Tevis, who was born February 26, 1928, in San Francisco, before moving to Kentucky when he was 10 years old, died on August 9, 1984 in New York City due to lung cancer. He was 56 years old.

Even before his first novel, *The Hustler* in 1959, which eventually brought him fame and fortune, Walter Tevis had begun to publish SF in various magazines. His short fiction has since been collected in *Far From Home* (1981). *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1963) was his first SF novel. He later wrote two more SF novels in the 1980s: *Mockingbird* (1980) and *The Steps of the Sun* (1983). His other mainstream novels were *The Queen's Gambit* (1983) and *The Color of Money* (1984).

This interview was conducted by telephone on March 16, 1984. It first appeared in the first issue of PARSEC, and is reprinted here by permission.

THRUST: Did you go to school in Kentucky?

TEVIS: Sure, in Lexington.

THRUST: You have a Ph.D. in literature?

TEVIS: No, I have two masters degrees, and I did the coursework for my Ph.D., but no dissertation. I did a science fiction novel instead—*The Man Who Fell to Earth*.

THRUST: That had to be more fun than doing a dissertation.

TEVIS: Yes, but I didn't get a Ph.D. with it.

THRUST: You worked in Ohio for quite a long time.

TEVIS: I was a professor of English literature and creative writing for 13 years at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. I quit that job a little over a year ago. Right. Something I've wanted to be most of my life. I finally had the courage to start doing it a few years ago.

THRUST: That was a big step wasn't it? Giving up a secure position and paycheck to pursue writing full time?

TEVIS: The alternative was turning into a vegetable. I had to get out of it. I was starting to repeat myself...

THRUST: Are you happy in New York?

TEVIS: Yes, I love it here. Actually, I left my job on a leave of absence four years ago and came to New York to write science fiction. I wanted to be in New York specifically to be near the publishing business—to get my career going. Now I'm established, and I'm not so sure I should be here anymore. Meanwhile, I have a lease on an apartment. So here I am. I like it.

THRUST: When did you decide that you wanted to be a writer?

TEVIS: I don't remember making that decision. I always knew I could write. But just a few years ago, after publishing 30 short stories and a couple of novels, I finally decided to be a writer. It's something I always knew I could do, but I've had a hard time getting around to it.

THRUST: Let's talk about some of the books you've written. What year did *The Hustler* see publication?

TEVIS: 1959.

THRUST: It's my understanding that before the book appeared you were writing a lot of short fiction about pool players and hustlers and such.

TEVIS: Yes, I was. When I was in college at the University of Kentucky I worked in a pool room. I was a cashier, and then selling hot dogs, and got to admiring the skill of some of the players who passed through there. I would sometimes stay up all night long watching them play. I admired them. I wanted to be like them, and I wanted to be able to shoot pool as well as they did. But I never could. Anyway, when I started out writing I wanted to be a poet—a lot of novelists are failed poets—and I used to sit in the basement of the house composing these self-regarding poems, and I would be very anxious to finish my poem so I could get down to the pool room and shoot pool. And it took several years for me to realize that I cared more about pool than those poems and that I might be able to use pool as subject matter for writing. I wrote a poem about a pool player first. But that didn't go so well, and then I wrote a short story about a pool player that I eventually sold to *ESQUIRE* magazine, after 17 rejections. There were 12 or 13 stories about pool players before *The Hustler*.

THRUST: You just said that many novelists are failed poets. Do you really believe that?

TEVIS: I think it's a fact. James Joyce, William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway wrote poetry when they were young. A hell of a lot of people write poetry—it's not just the novelists doing it. The dabble of language gets hold of a lot of us and that's a natural step toward writing novels. My novels are the best kind of poems I know how to write.

THRUST: The film version of *The Hustler* appeared two years after the book was published. Did you write the screenplay?

TEVIS: In part. A man named Sidney Carroll did most of the work on it, and the producer

of the film, Robert Rossen, worked on it also. I was nominated for the Screenwriter's Annual Award for the film, but I didn't get the award and I didn't get credit for work on the screenplay. Almost all the dialogue in the film came from my book anyway.

THRUST: *The Man Who Fell to Earth* came along in 1963. What took you from pool halls to Mars?

TEVIS: I'm not sure myself. I've wondered about it a lot. After I did *The Hustler*, and the movie came along and the book really took off, becoming more successful than I had ever imagined it might be, I started getting offers to write things like *The Son of the Hustler* and *The Bride of the Hustler* and *The Hustler Returns* and stuff like that. It was suggested I try changing the game--to ping-pong or poker or something--and I guess I was afraid I couldn't repeat the success and I didn't want to get caught in that rut of doing the same thing over and over again. There was a short story I had written years before *The Hustler*. It was called "The Immigrant" and it was just a 1500-word story about a very sophisticated, neurotic, wealthy person who the reader comes to know is from another planet. He is bringing in a spaceship to land in a Kentucky pasture, outside his isolated Kentucky mansion, where he has been living for the last 15 years or so, acquiring billions of dollars selling technology. And the reader is led to suspect that when the spaceship lands, out will step some kind of invading army. At the end of the story, the spaceship lands and the hatch opens and a woman and some children come out and embrace the man who brought them in. They are his family from the old country.

THRUST: That's really nice! How come I've never seen that story?

TEVIS: I never finished it. I wrote about two-thirds of it, this was a long time ago--around 1955--and I got so hung up on the background, like how does he make all that money and how does he do everything that he does, that the story just got to be too much exposition and too much explanation and I never finished it. Anyway, after *The Hustler* I found myself suddenly with a lot of money and a lot of offers to write something else, and I guess I was running away from success--I really don't know--and I wanted to do something different and I didn't want to spend the rest of my life writing the same book about young hustlers over and over again. So I already had the framework for a different kind of novel in my short-short story about the immigrant and I worked it out and wrote *The Man Who Fell to Earth*.

THRUST: Newton, the protagonist in *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, was a really wonderful character study. I suspect the book can be read and interpreted on several levels. But when I read the book I got the distinct impression that it was really a book about alcoholism and estrangement.

TEVIS: Sure it is. You're absolutely right. I'm a reformed alcoholic, you see. When I wrote *The Man Who Fell to Earth* however, I was sort of "falling" into alcoholism. I was drinking all the time and *The Man Who Fell to Earth* is a drinking book. And so is *The Hustler*, for that matter. In fact, Fast Eddie, the protagonist in *The Hustler*, blows his first big game with Minnesota Fats because he gets drunk. It

represents something I was afraid of at the time. I could see it in myself: I was in my 20s and I wasn't drinking all the time then, but I was drinking a hell of a lot.

THRUST: Is Newton autobiographical?
TEVIS: I was a very tall, skinny, weak kid. I told you that I left San Francisco when I was 10 years old. Well, I spent a year and a half in the hospital with a heart condition, when I was a kid in California. And then when I was taken out of the hospital I was sent to Kentucky. So I arrived in Kentucky at the age of 11 very tall, very thin, with a strange Californian accent.

THRUST: Sort of felt like an alien, didn't you?
TEVIS: Yes. They beat the shit out of me every other day. And I was physically weak because I had not been allowed out of bed for the past several months. In the book, Newton lands in Kentucky and he is not accustomed to the gravity, and it's a totally alien culture, and the striking thing about all this is that I wasn't aware consciously, of the similarity between us until I saw the film. I knew I was writing about my own sense of estrangement, and I knew I was writing about my fear of alcoholism, but I wasn't aware of that particular aspect of the novel.

THRUST: So, in some ways, you saw the film for the first time just like the rest of us.
TEVIS: Yes indeed.

THRUST: How do you feel about that? Do you feel like you are "exposing" yourself when they make a film out of your books? **TEVIS:** There is exhibitionism involved in writing any book, and there is nothing on that level about myself that I feel a need to keep a secret. Aesthetically, I do have some quarrels with the film.

THRUST: You didn't like the film?

TEVIS: If I didn't like it I'd say so. I thought David Bowie was terrific! I really liked him; I liked him as a man when I worked on the film, which I did briefly, and I liked his performance because he really hit what I was trying to say--more in his gestures and movements than in the dialogue. And I liked some of the camera work. But I thought the script, which, by the way, I had nothing at all to do with, was pretentious and overlong and confusing. I wish I had written it myself.

THRUST: Is writing a screenplay harder than writing a novel?

TEVIS: Not for me. Screenplays are about 120 pages long and that's about all I want to write about any subject.

THRUST: Do you like writing? Or is writing work for you?
TEVIS: When it goes well for me I love it. There is nothing I like better. But it doesn't always go well. When I'm really turned on and the words just flow out of my fingertips it's great.

THRUST: The film versions of your books are referred to as modern classics, and I've often wondered how you must feel about the cult following these films have elicited.

TEVIS: I wish it were the books instead of the films.

THRUST: Did the books pick up in popularity after the films? Or were they pretty popular

before the films came along?

TEVIS: *The Man Who Fell to Earth* was more popular than *The Hustler*. They both sold well, but not spectacularly well. *The Man Who Fell to Earth* had been out quite a long time before the movie came along. The book was published in 1963 and the movie was released in 1976, so it had a long time to pile up sales. It sold a lot of copies, in the hundreds of thousands, but it never was a best seller.

THRUST: I suppose one problem with being a writer is that you get "labeled" by your readers. I think it's fair to say that for a long time now you have been labeled "author of *The Man Who Fell to Earth*". Have you written anything more significant or more deserving of recognition that you want people to sit up and take notice of?

TEVIS: I liked *Mockingbird*. I think it deserves a serious reading.

THRUST: That book appeared in 1980. There is a seventeen year gap between novels there... what took so long?

TEVIS: I was drunk most of the time.

THRUST: Paul Bently, the protagonist in *Mockingbird*, is a college professor in a world of non-readers.

TEVIS: Yes. And he's sobering up. You see, *The Man Who Fell to Earth* is about the other side of alcoholism, when I was getting into it; *Mockingbird* is after I've come out of it.

THRUST: So *Mockingbird* is also an autobiographical novel?

TEVIS: Sure. I think science fiction is a great autobiographical medium. You can hide yourself behind those robots--you can really be self-indulgent without appearing to be. That's one of science fiction's greatest charms.

THRUST: Do you think science fiction is being used as an autobiographical medium more than we recognize?

TEVIS: I don't know. The truth is, I don't read a lot of it. But a lot of what I have read seems to me very cerebral. Some novels are like verbal chess games and they seem to be a device the writer uses to avoid his feelings.

THRUST: I haven't heard science fiction referred to as a verbal chess game in a long time.

TEVIS: I'm preoccupied with chess now because I'm currently in the middle of a novel about a child prodigy chess player.

THRUST: When will that be appearing?
TEVIS: I'm on page 314 now. Random House will be publishing it in about a year. I've got a science fiction novel coming out in October, from Doubleday, titled *The Steps of the Sun*. It's yet another autobiographical novel. About a New York real estate man.

THRUST: A science-fiction novel about a New York real estate man?

TEVIS: Why not? I want to humanize science fiction. But to get back to what we were talking about, I do think a lot of science fiction is cerebral. It presents an answer to a "what if" sort of question: You know, what if this or that kind of technology ran rampant? What if overpopulation became a fact of life? What if

this? What if that? And there is some of that in *Mockingbird*. Even in *The Man Who Fell to Earth* there is a reversal of a cliché—what if an invader from another planet had only benign intentions? And what if he were more soulful than we?

THRUST: Is it true that you're now involved in writing a screenplay version of *Mockingbird* for PBS television?

TEVIS: I wrote a screenplay version of *Mockingbird* for public television, and they failed to raise the money to produce it. Fortunately I wrote the contract in such a way that I got to keep the script if they failed to come up with the money to do the film.

THRUST: Is there any possibility we may yet see a film version of *Mockingbird*?

TEVIS: Well, my Hollywood agent has the screenplay and the last time that I talked to her she said there were two producers and one screenwriter looking at it. I don't want the screenwriter to get it. I like the screenplay the way it is. I was really disappointed that PBS couldn't make it. There are some really nice people there.

THRUST: They did a fine adaptation of one of LeGuin's books.

TEVIS: Yes! Those were the people I was working with. They did *The Lathe of Heaven*, and *Mockingbird* was going to be the second in a series of films of which *The Lathe of Heaven* was the first. *The Lathe of Heaven* did so well that they were able to get a much larger budget for *Mockingbird* approved. But then a lot of things happened and the committee that had approved *The Lathe of Heaven* and *Mockingbird* stepped out, and another group stepped in, and the new committee was strongly opposed to science fiction. *The Lathe of Heaven* was a handsome film. It cost only about \$850,000 to produce.

THRUST: Do you encourage young people to pursue writing as a career?

TEVIS: Only if they want to do it, and they can live on very little money.

THRUST: Is it more difficult to get into print than it was 10 years ago?

TEVIS: It is easier for me than it used to be. In general it's a little tougher now than it used to be because publishers aren't taking a lot of chances now. Production costs have gone up and publishing houses are more and more being bought and controlled by major corporations, and so they are being run by accountants who say the only thing that counts is the bottom line. The basic publishing philosophy now is don't take chances and look for the blockbusters. It's one thing to get your book published. It's quite another thing to make a lot of money with it. All in all, it's easier than a lot of people think to get into print. It's much harder than most people think to make a living writing.

THRUST: You had a short story collection from Doubleday, titled *Far From Home*, appear last year. There were 13 stories in that book and they were written over a long period of time.

TEVIS: *Far From Home* contains all of my science fiction short stories. Seven of them were written within the last couple of years prior to the appearance of the book, and six

of them date back to the '50s.

THRUST: What comes harder for you, writing short fiction or working at novel length?

TEVIS: Actually, it's pretty easy for me to write a short story. The novel length is harder because I have a short attention span—it's hard for me to keep an idea going for more than a few hundred pages. It isn't at all unusual to see a science-fiction novel that is really a 30- or 40-page idea stretched into a 300-page book. I think that's a problem with science fiction. And that's what I'm talking about when I say that a lot of science fiction is cerebral: If a novel doesn't have a strong feeling in it, it's hard to keep reading. It's hard to write the stuff that way too, without honest feelings.

THRUST: Are you self-conscious about writing science fiction? Do you feel that you would be taken more seriously if you wrote something else?

TEVIS: Yes. That's certainly true. Science fiction just isn't taken very seriously by the public at large.

THRUST: Could you say what you want to say using another literary genre?

TEVIS: Sure. I certainly say what I want to say discursively in a variety of genres. I think I'm saying quite a lot in this book I'm currently at work on, about a very bright, neurotic, young girl who plays chess. It's a conventional kind of novel but I'm saying things with it. However, my imagination runs toward the extravagant, and the imaginary world you see in *Mockingbird* says something for me also. That grim world you see is meant to be my statement about what the world of an alcoholic is like—a drugged world, a world without much life or purpose. And I felt that way for a great many years. I didn't come right out and say it in *Mockingbird*. There was no point in my saying directly "Hey! This world of the 25th-century is like the world of a 20th-century drunk." But it was something I had to say and *Mockingbird* says it. I can say almost anything I want to say in any genre, but there are some things science fiction can say indirectly, and it suits my taste.

THRUST: Do you resent the tendency for people to pry into your personal life? Do you think they should be satisfied to read the books and leave it at that?

TEVIS: No. I don't resent people's curiosity. I'm basically an egotistical person. I'm vain, a bit of a "wul-like" talking about myself. But I don't think an appreciation of a writer's books should depend upon a knowledge of his life. I would like my life to be irrelevant to the books. I want people to read my books for the sake of the books themselves.

THRUST: A moment ago you mentioned a new book titled *The Steps of the Sun*. What can you tell us about it?

TEVIS: It's a psychological novel. It's written in very much a "grown up" way, and by that I mean that I don't get carried away with all the hardware and I don't get into a "gee whiz" frame of mind while writing. I mean, it's so easy to invent hardware, and it's so easy to invent worlds, and it's so difficult to concentrate on matters of the heart in a book like this. Anyway, my protagonist is a 50-year-old red-haired state man, a multimillionaire, who is suffering from a lot of psychological problems—like divorce and

sexual impotence and too much alcohol. He buys a moth-balled, Chinese spaceship called *The Flower of Heavenly Repose* and goes off to the star Fornalhaut to explore its known planets, looking for a safe form of uranium which will react without meltdown, in order to repower New York. New York is on the way to becoming the New York of *Mockingbird*. The elevators no longer run, to save electricity, so nobody lives above the eighth and ninth stories except derelicts and vandals. And the subways no longer run, and so New York is becoming a dying city. Still it has a certain fin de siècle glamour about it, like 19th century Vienna, and a lot of tourists, especially Chinese tourists, come to New York. China is the richest nation in the world. So my hero wants to restore New York to its former grandeur, and he also wants to get away from his personal problems. And he does indeed find the uranium he is looking for on another planet. While he is there he undergoes a potent mystical experience which alters him psychologically. He solves his personal problems and returns to earth. One of the stories in *Far From Home*, a story titled "The Apotheosis of Myra," contains some of the ideas in *The Steps of the Sun*.

THRUST: If you put the books together—*The Man Who Fell to Earth*, *The Steps of the Sun* and *Mockingbird*—would you have a future history on your hands?

TEVIS: In a way, I suppose so. I think of the books more in terms of my own psychological history. *The Man Who Fell to Earth* is a really grim, downbeat book. *Mockingbird* is much more upbeat, though in a qualified way because one of the main characters, the robot Spofford, dies. But Spofford wanted to die—I think I killed a part of myself when I killed Spofford—but the principal characters, Paul and Mary Lou, survive and they even have a baby. *The Steps of the Sun* is a downright cheerful book. It contains a hopefulness that I have never in my life had up until now. I feel I've earned it. So, for me, that's the progression. You could plug the books together and call them a future history, but I don't have a chart on my wall, as I understand Robert Heinlein does, that I try to adhere to. I have no interest in predicting the future beyond Thursday. Everything I write is about the here and now, even if it's science fiction.

THRUST: Over the years have you developed any generalizations about the field of science fiction?

TEVIS: It seems to me to be a quasi-religious medium. Science fiction is very moralizing—it concerns itself with separating the good guys from the bad guys and with defining virtue. I don't know if the writers are consciously doing what they do, but I think a lot of people read science fiction to get some of the satisfaction of religion without the bother of belief.

THRUST: Any current projects you want to tell us about?

TEVIS: I think after the book I'm working on now I'll try a stage play. I plan to adapt a couple of stories from *Far From Home*—"A Visit From Mother" and "Daddy." I think they're the best short stories I've written. I realized after writing them that they're very stagey—three characters in an apartment setting and all that—and I think I'm going to do it as a two-act play. I've always wanted to be a playwright. That came after wanting to be a poet. Fiction is really a last resort. □

Dead In Suburbia

Or Whatever Happened to Feminism in SF?



Janrae Frank

It is a disquieting feeling to write a long, thoughtful article and, just before pulling the last page out of the typewriter, discover that the whole premise upon which it has been based is totally wrong.

Last year when I sat down to write an article on the egalitarianism of Barbara Hambly's brand of fictional feminism, I decided that I needed to put her work into historical perspective. Up until then I had believed that the 1980 bestowal of the World Fantasy Award for best anthology to *Amazons* marked the literary high water mark for feminism in science fiction and fantasy. But if that was the zenith, it was a very short-lived

literary movement, for although swordswomen and sorceresses are still out there saving the world, we no longer see those hardcore feminist delvings into the natures of womanhood and femininity, the search for definitions of sexuality and the essence of the female experience in a variety of cultures which characterized the New Wave writings of LeGuin, Russ, and Charnas (to name but a few).

It has been absent for half a decade, unless you include Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. But Atwood is really a mainstream writer dabbling in the conventions of science fiction. So what happened to

science fiction and fantasy feminism?

If feminism began in 1975 with Russ' *The Female Man*, peaked with *Amazons* in 1980 and dropped dead the next year, then it was little more than a stillborn child. When a movement, political or literary, starts out, it is composed of a few voices crying in the proverbial wilderness. When a movement first achieves power it is at its height; in literature this usually takes the form of an award and/or critical acclaim or even popular acclaim. And when it becomes generally accepted, it has lost its momentum, settled into the suburbs and quietly died. The essence of feminist writings has been to explore female realities,

to question the nature of their sexuality and the dictates of biology, and to stand in open rebellion to repressive regimes (patriarchal and otherwise) and the status quo. In the earliest books, the writers were content to explore familiar patriarchal realms where men held the legal authority and were more or less passively repressive, the familiar phenomenon which operated in our own culture.

Their protagonists were strong women who either turned the tenets of the culture against itself or held themselves outside its rules as outcasts and rebels. Gradually this changed as women looked for a means to bring the differences and the similarities of men and women (as they perceived them) into sharper focus.

For Ursula LeGuin this meant an exploration of androgyny, for Joanna Russ it meant the complete rejection of the male sex as a fundamentally alien (to women) species. In the end, all the outward trappings of feminism were adopted by the majority of women (and some men). We see women space pilots, warriors, wizards, and scientists by the score; but the heavy philosophical underpinnings are mostly absent, merely given lip service in passing. The mid-level writers have taken the "active" heroine into their hearts and their fiction, but almost no one is asking why or offering any keys to the universal uniquely female/feminist consciousness.

What happened to feminism? That first voice crying in the wilderness was probably C.L. Moore when she wrote of Jirel of Joiry and a scattering of other intriguing women protagonists. But she dropped out of science fiction in the late '50s, roughly a decade before the advent of feminism and the New Wave, and before there were enough screams coming from the wilderness of science fiction to constitute a movement.

Feminism landed in science fiction hand in hand with the New Wave. The women in both fandom and prodrom have, in the main, been a peculiar breed: intelligent, often brilliant, eccentric and fiercely independent. It was inevitable that one day they would stop writing about male heroes and start creating female protagonists simply because they wanted to write characters which they, as women, could relate to and identify with, and that other women would want to read about for the same reasons. Eventually, this led to works in which the writers sought to explore their own inner dynamics, to exorcise the personal ghosts haunting their philosophies, and to define the nature of womanhood and the female experience.

Feminism really got started with Anne McCaffrey in the mid '60s. She started out writing stories with male protagonists such as Daffyd ow Owen in her "Wild Talents" stories for John W. Campbell. Her stories about the "Ship that Sang," in which a female human is encased in the hull of a starship to give the ship intelligence and intuition beyond the abilities of mere computers, occupy a period of change in her work.

In these stories, McCaffrey explored the emotions of love, while denying the pull of sexuality, exploring more the nature of humanity than femininity. She made a gradual changeover from writing strong women as secondary characters to giving them center stage. The change was not missed by her main editor, Campbell, and it must have bothered him.

According to Pamela Sargent's



introduction to *Women of Wonder*, he ordered McCaffrey to make the heroine of her story "A Womanly Talent" more traditional. She complied and Campbell bought it. The changes notwithstanding, it is one of her more memorable works.

Then, in 1967, McCaffrey made the break through into feminism as one of her most intriguing and irresistibly strong-minded female protagonists not only seized center stage, but a Nebula Award as well. This was Lessa and the story was "Weyrsearch." Lessa, a telepathically talented young woman, turned the patriarchal system against itself to contrive the death of her male oppressor and secure her own freedom.

In 1969, Ursula LeGuin took both feminism and the New Wave movements in a long leap to the literary heights in an unsettling journey into the nature of sexuality in *The Left Hand of Darkness*. The planet Winter is home to an alien race whose people are neither male nor female, but change back and forth as they come into "kemmer" or heat. It has been said by some feminist scholars, at least partly because the human protagonist is male, that *The Left Hand of Darkness* is not so much a feminist work as an achievement of sexual satiri, a humanist document.

However, it should be kept in mind that in 1969 the feminist movement had not yet embraced the conviction that A) feminism was a movement and ideology separate from that of humanism per se; and B) that a male could not be a feminist, and hence a story with a male protagonist could not be a feminist document.

But feminist, humanist, or Zen (as some scholars now insist), much of ideologically hardcore feminist fiction, such as Joanna Russ' "When It Changed" and Suzy McKee Charnas' *Walk to the End of the World*--both fictional works in which men and women view each other as mutually exclusive species--could not have existed if LeGuin had not pioneered the way with *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

The pinnacle of critical and general

acceptance of feminist science fiction came in 1972. It was also the highest point for ideologically hardcore feminist works of fiction. That was the year the *Dangerous Visions* anthology appeared on the shelves, edited by the eternally controversial bad boy of the genre, Harlan Ellison. The stories in *Dangerous Visions* were some of the most brilliant ever written and certainly the most provocative up to that time. But the work singled out for recognition by the SFWA, and crowned best in the volume by merit of a Nebula Award, was Joanna Russ' "When It Changed".

Russ had always been the ultimate literary rebel in science fiction. Her series character, Alyx, was a woman who chose the life of an outcast adventurer, abandoning both husband and child, to fulfill her own questionable destiny. Alyx went further than any of the heroines that were her contemporaries, both in her attitudes toward traditional femininity (she was contemptuous both of the values themselves and the people who held them) and because she was, living as a thief, just a trifle amoral.

But, with "When It Changed" and the novel it begat, *The Female Man* (1975), Russ gave feminist science fiction its most ideologically radical work. On the planet called Whilaway, all the men have died of a sex-specific plague several generations before the story's opening. The women marry, have sexual relationships, and reproduce through parthenogenesis. At the opening of "When It Changed," a band of male spacers have arrived to reestablish contact with the planet. For these men it's a dream come true, a planet of women for them to romp through and initiate into the rituals of heterosexual bliss.

But instead of greeting the men with enthusiasm as the conquering heroes they perceive themselves to be, the Whilaways, who have no records of masculinity (they lost them in the chaos of that plague), and have never seen so much as an image of a male, perceive these newcomers as a not entirely welcome alien species. Russ has taken women to the utmost extreme from our two-sex reality and found them to be happy and well-adjusted.

In the same way that LeGuin's *Left Hand of Darkness*, which pioneered a whole new perception of female sexuality, is now considered to be a humanist rather than a feminist, work, so are "When It Changed" and *The Female Man* now regarded in many scholarly quarters as being not feminist works, but lesbian separatist works as more and more critics, historians and scholars have begun to redefine the relationship between feminist and purely lesbian fiction.

Between the publication of "When It Changed" and the arrival on the bookshelves of the novel it inspired, *The Female Man*, there was another gender-popularity novel published by one of those rare feminist writers who could equal both the ideology and unleashed brilliance of Joanna Russ: Suzy McKee Charnas.

Walk to the End of the World is a masterpiece of mood and intensity, a post-holocaust world in which men have placed all the blame for their situation on women (i.e., the destruction of civilization, the ever-present threat of crop failures due to residual radiation, etc.) and live in a homo-adulatory and acutely misogynistic society.

The women are regarded as being so filthy and evil that they aren't even acceptable sex objects; sexual contact between male and female is limited largely to brief liaisons required by law and custom to perpetuate the race; and love is limited to the feelings of one man for another. In other words, women are the degraded slaves and property of men. *Walk* is the story of the "fem" Aldera, who has secretly been sent to discover whether the legendary "Free Fems" really exist, for the leaders of the female underground fear that the ultimate confrontation between male and female is coming, brought on by crop failures and serious food shortages.

Walk is also the story of Aldera's two masters, one a sensitive but largely ineffectual young man, Eyekar Bek, who sees tentatively beyond his culture; and his savagely opportunistic lover, Servan D Layo. Unaware of her secret mission, they are taking Aldera to the edge of their world, very near where she hopes to find the Free Fems. The book concludes as their society disintegrates in the throes of sexual genocide. Bek allows Aldera to escape and she plunges into the wilderness beyond the limits of known civilization.

The sequel, *Motherlines*, published in 1979, lacked much of the intensity of *Walk*, but went deeply into the pros and cons of the female psyche—and to some degree found it lacking. In *Motherlines*, Aldera is no longer a woman in a world of men, but a woman in a world exclusively comprised of women.

Her Free Fems are a disappointment, a superstitious, desperate and dirty bunch. But on the plains which Aldera has reached in her flight, there is a second race of women, the genetically altered "Riding Women," who mate with stallions to trigger parthenogenetic reproduction. At the end, Aldera chooses to go back to her homeland to see whether anyone survived the terrible genocide. The long awaited third volume has never come out.

In the year 1973, between the publication of "When It Changed" and *Walk to the End of the World*, another post-holocaust tale marched into the ranks of feminist classics. Unlike the two works from Russ and Charnas, "Of Mist and Grass and Sand" was not about the polarization of men and women. In this story from the pen of Vonda McIntyre, a strong female healer brought both enlightenment and a peculiar but effective band of medicine to a band of primitive patriarchal tribespeople. It won a Nebula Award in 1973.

The major ideological breakthroughs were pretty much over by the mid to late '70s. In 1976 there was *Dragonsong* by McCaffrey, her most self-consciously feminist novel, about Mennoly, who wants to be a harper in a world where only men wrote songs. In 1979 there was *Motherlines* from Charnas.

Between 1975 and 1979 five outstanding feminist anthologies saw print: *Women of Wonder* (1975), *Aurora: Beyond Equality* (1976), *More Women of Wonder* (1976), *New Women of Wonder* (1978), and *Amazons* (1979).

Amazons, an original anthology from DAW, was the last overtly feminist work to receive a major award. Released in November 1979, it took the World Fantasy Award in 1980 for best anthology. It was so well accepted, in fact, that the editor, Jessica Amanda Salmonson, proved to be more controversial than the anthology. An



outspoken feminist ideologue, with two successive fanzines (*WINDHAVEN* and *NAGINATA*) devoted to the subject of warrior women and a critically acclaimed ideologically hardcore feminist trilogy about the Japanese warrior woman, Tomoe Gozen, Salmonson was revealed to be a transsexual.

The feminist literary community, which had for years been touting the fact that women could write well-rounded male characters but men could not write well-rounded female characters, was definitely set on its ear by this fact.

By the time that *Amazons* won its rewards, the main thrusts of feminist fiction were no longer being made in science fiction, but had shifted to the realm of fantasy. These books were relatively mild works (compared to Russ, Charnas, and McIntyre) by writers entering at the waning of the movement: Phyllis Anne Karr, Barbara Hambly, and Jo Clayton. The female protagonist was already becoming widely accepted and adopted by writers, both male and female (Busby, Offutt, Martin and Tuttle, Green, Schwartz, et al).

No longer did the mere presence of a strong woman on center stage make a feminist statement in and of itself. The impact of these figures was becoming diluted by the enormous deluge of female warriors, sorceresses and space pilots. Other aspects of these works became of more critical importance in determining whether a work of fiction was indeed feminist or not.

The major works of Elizabeth Lynn, a feminist in her personal life, such as her *Chronicles of Tarnor* trilogy, were feminist only in passing. The first book had a pair of young men as the central figures and a pair of lesbian warriors as the secondary leads. The trilogy, however, was far more concerned with the introspective exploration of Zen and the phenomenon of violence than with the nature of female experience or thought.

The fantasies of Barbara Hambly were more caught up in egalitarian societies, where her women could be wife and mother or sword-wielding adventurer with equal acceptance...with one interesting exception: *The Ladies of Mandrigyn*. The women of Mandrigyn, whose men have been taken away by a sorcerer, have sought in vain to hire mercenaries to free their husbands, sons and lovers.

Instead they kidnap a mercenary captain and force him to teach them to fight. But they

are not fighting for their freedom, or any feminist concerns: They are fighting to regain the soft life they had before their men were taken away. But by rescuing their men in this way, they forever lose the lifestyle they were fighting for. The book never suggests that these changes are superior to their previous way of life, as the major feminist literature of the past 10 years would have—merely that change begets change and, in a Zen fashion, that change can never be truly reversed. And most importantly, that even desired changes bring with them undesired changes, and are therefore a mixed blessing.

Frostflower and Thorn, Phyllis Anne Karr's sensitive probing into the feelings of nurturant and non-nurturant women (the natural mother who doesn't want the child, the sworn virgin who barters for the child, and the barren wife whose husband tries to steal the child) adds an intriguing feminist perspective to an old form of fiction: the heroic fantasy.

Jo Clayton's *Duel of Sorcery* trilogy is essentially a masterful retelling of the Persephone legend, recounting the trials of a sensitive young, psychically-talented girl, Serroi, who has been reared by a powerful castrate sorcerer-avator of the God of Darkness. He has raised up his own patriarchal cult and turned it loose against the followers of a nurturant goddess-avator.

Serroi is thrust between the forces of the goddess and the god, with the power to decide the outcome. Clayton manages to maintain the thrust of her metaphor (male/female, nurturant/non-nurturant, Goddess/God) while richly characterizing the good and bad folks of both sexes with equal perception.

None of these last three novels and novellas are as hard-edged as the feminists of the early to mid 1970s; there seems to be no driving ideology to extol, to prove, to try in literary battle against the oppressors of the patriarchy. In both the *Duel of Sorcery* and the *Ladies of Mandrigyn* the result of the conflict and changes is not the promise of a feminist utopia but the hope of egalitarianism.

Men are not the enemy, they are not viewed in a gender—polarity, separate species way (as they were in the previously mentioned works of Charnas and Russ); the enemy is the fascist, masculinist beliefs of a group of men AND women. The voices of the authors are less strident, more centered, more aware of the fact that there are and can be excesses on both sides.

To whatever degree that the writings of Karr, Hambly and Clayton can be considered egalitarian, they can also be considered egalitarian. Feminism has moved back toward the center, back to its roots in humanism. The feminists of the 1970s would probably not have considered Karr, Hambly and Clayton to be ideologically pure. Karr's *Frostflower*, Hambly's *Minalde*, even to some degree Clayton's *Serroi*, are what Russ once scornfully called "gentle intuitive little heroines."

But they are an iron fist in a velvet glove, as strong as the warrior women who are their companions in adventure and adversity. Egalitarianism has overtaken feminism (to a greater or lesser degree, depending on which of the three authors you're looking at), and while feminism may not be entirely deceased, it is definitely different from anything it has been before. To paraphrase Walt Kelly, "We feminists have found the egalitarians, and they are us." □

WORDS & PICTURES

movie reviews

by Darrell Schweitzer

Now is the time of night when graveyards yawn, etc. Well, not exactly, but this column shall take on a darker cast because most of the films I have to review this time comes under the broad category of "horror." Science fiction seems to be almost in abeyance in Hollywood right now. There just haven't been any major films in a while.

The word is that everyone is still running scared over the *Dune* fiasco, and other successes are quickly being rationalized away. Back to the Future? No, that was a teen romance. *Aliens*? That's an adventure film. But *Dune*? That's science fiction. Ergo, science-fiction movies don't sell. Sometimes I think Hollywood executives are in business to lose money.

First on the bill is *The Witches of Eastwick* (Warner Brothers). This is not a genre horror film by any means. Instead, it's a genre adaptation of a big-time literary novel, despite which it is one of the most entertaining supernatural fantasy films to come along in a while.

Cher, Susan Sarandon, and Michelle Pfeiffer are the witches. Jack Nicholson is the "horny little devil," Daryl Van Horne. (The movie is full of sexual innuendoes and puns, that name among them.) The rest of the cast is secondary, although there is not a bad performance in the lot. Director George Miller deserves the credit for a lively, fun film.

The plot is simply that the three witches (who are already witches at the beginning of the film, apparently, since one of them can raise a storm by tapping her foot impatiently during a boring speech in the first scene), all good-looking divorced or widowed women approaching middle age, feel unfulfilled. They wish aloud for an exciting "dark prince," and they get Nicholson, a male chauvinist slob of a devil, who represents everything women both desire and loathe in men.

He beds all of them, and scandal erupts in the small New England town of Eastwick. The witchcraft is extremely traditional from this point: levitations, victims vomiting odd objects (again the sexual innuendoes—mostly cherry pits), curses, voodoo dolls, etc. When someone gets killed, the women are first frightened and they desert Horne, who turns his wrath on them. When one of the witches is herself horribly cursed (with bleeding in pregnancy). The three of them have to get rid of Van Horne. And they do—sort of.

This is mostly a comedy, but there are generally horrific aspects—which blend in surprisingly well. It also mostly a film of character, but with spectacular special effects. Truly special effects have come of age—a means, rather than an end in themselves—when a "literary" movie like this, with big-name stars, has special effects worthy of *Poltergeist*. The most striking effect of all occurs at the climax, when Nicholson appears, huge and grotesquely mutilated, after the voodoo doll in his image has been damaged.

For the thoughtful viewer, the question arises: Is this a feminist film, or a caricature of

one? On one level, it's purely feminist. The women all learn how they can get along by themselves and don't need men. All the men in it are either extreme chauvinists, like Van Horne, or wimps, simpletons, and pompous asses. There isn't even a single male character in this film who is good-looking.

But at the same time, this sort of seeming-feminism is pushed to the point of caricature. The women, all of whom are beautiful, both despise and desire men. They seem like stereotypical, doctrinaire feminist witches, but at the same time they all find Nicholson irresistible. He is, after all, a creature summoned by their own fantasies. And the movie is based on a work by a notably misogynistic writer. So, I don't know. Let's see how the feminists react.

Now descending to a lower level, there is *From Beyond* (Empire Pictures), directed by Stuart Gordon, starring Jeffrey Coombs, Ted Sorell, and Barbara Crampton. That's the same folks who brought us *Re-animator*, and they're repeating their previous formula of taking a truly terrible H.P. Lovecraft story and making a (vaguely) campy movie worthy of it. I shudder (unspokeably, in delirious prose no doubt) at the thought of what they might do with good Lovecraft, but as long as they stick to bad Lovecraft, Gordon and friends seem to have found their level.

There's less humor this time. The original Lovecraft story is just flat and underdeveloped, whereas "Herbert West—Re-animator" is hilarious in spots. About the first 15 minutes of the film are quite faithful. Crawford Tillinghast is working on a "resonator" which does pseudo-scientific hocus-pocus with vibrations and dimensions and lets us see into other worlds co-existent with our own. Worse yet, they let Things from those worlds see us.

So, when one of them bites off the head of Tillinghast's mentor, Tillinghast is left with a lot of explaining to do when the police arrive. Sure enough he's clapped in a madhouse, but an ambitious woman psychiatrist believes his story enough for further investigations to take place. Meanwhile, because of his exposure to the vibrations, Tillinghast's pineal gland is expanding. This does odd things to his brain.

The whole movie would have done odd things to H.P. Lovecraft's brain, because at this point we get large dollops of kinky sex. The mentor, Dr. Pretorius (ahem!), was heavily into leather, whips, and chains. Now he comes back from the other dimension, his head attached to a weird alien body, as a super-sexual being who proceeds to tempt and terrify the lady psychiatrist, Crampton. There follows a vast amount of special-effects spectacle, while Tillinghast is transformed into Something Else, and struggles to stay human. The film balances precariously between entertaining trash and something a bit more serious, failing to combine the disparate elements as well as, say, the Cronenberg remake of *The Fly*.

And now, at the absolute bottom, you might want to see Stephen King's *Maximum Overdrive* just to find out if the movie really is as bad as the critics have said. This one has been an utter disaster in every way, and a glorious opportunity for spiteful critics to jump on King who, after all, couldn't be any good if he's that popular, could he? One New York paper gave this one an unprecedented no-star rating.

JACK NICHOLSON
CHER SUSAN SARANDON MICHELLE PFEIFFER

THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK

So, much of the carping has been unfair, but the question remains: Is the movie as bad as all that?

The answer is, unfortunately, yes. In fact, it's the new Plan 9 From Outer Space, a movie so awesomely terrible it can only be watched in a party atmosphere with a lot of cynical fans who can manage to "like" really bad stuff. Otherwise, forget it.

King himself directed and wrote the screenplay and largely is to blame. Dino De Laurentiis gets the rest of the blame for producing and allowing this fiasco to get onto the screen at all, unless you want to mention the hapless cast who, with a couple of exceptions--notably Emilio Estevez, who has already been in far better things--face a bright future of being chopped up in slasher films. The woman who delivers the "We made you! You owe us some respect!" speech to a horde of malevolent trucks surely deserves some sort of Golden Turkey award for that performance alone. It is truly astonishing.

I think what has happened here is that King, in his first directorial effort, has failed to understand the film medium. He must have remembered all the "good bits" in favorite B-movies he's seen, and tried to fill his own with the same. King's "good bits" are all his own, all original, and all uniquely terrible.

"Banal" is a word that keeps coming to mind. The others are "obvious" and "illogical." This is a story about trucks--but not cars, for some reason--and a random assortment of other machines that come to life after the Earth has passed through the tail of a comet, and then besiege a bunch of plain folks in a truck stop in South Carolina.

What is most remarkable is that every trick shot, from watermelons falling on windshields to people being run over, sliced and diced, is dragged out without any sense of restraint or pacing. Even David Cronenberg knows that if you want to gross 'em out, you gotta make 'em queasy first, with little disgusting things, which build up to big disgusting things, and SPLAT! There go the cookies.

But King doesn't know that. The whole aesthetic of *Maximum Overdrive* is best summed up by the exploding truck which showers burning toilet paper rolls all over the driveway. (I bet King thought that a clever touch.) The resultant film has none of the characteristics which have made his own fiction successful, and predictably, has not been a success at all.

But it has to be seen to be believed.

The one notable science-fiction production of recent months has been the six episodes of the TV series *Max Headroom*. It's sort of an import, a remake of a British show, and perhaps it's the British influence which makes it so good, but *Max* is an astonishing effort for American commercial TV.

It has cyberpunk trappings and is, particularly for TV, remarkably adult, gripping and imaginative. It makes few concessions to a mass audience. For this reason alone, its success--and renewal for another season--is something of a mystery. I suppose it was a "pretty lights" phenomenon, such as propelled 2001 to box office super-success. In other words, the audience didn't really understand it, but the images were striking enough that they watched it anyway.

Most of you have probably already seen *Max*. If you haven't, that's what VCRs are for, folks. Go thou and watch, and you will find a

television show which might best be described as *The Name of the Game* in the setting of *Bladerunner*.

It raises all sorts of interesting questions. For once we have a television show with genuine moral ambiguity. The good guys are members of the establishment, basically reformers rather than revolutionaries--which is why it isn't genuine cyberpunk, for all the trappings--but the society they defend isn't all that much worth defending, by our standards. That is, there are safe hideaways where the rich and talented play with marvelous high-tech toys, but most of the population seems to live in squalor as TV-addicted drones. (The initial episode involves a kind of subliminal advertising which makes the worst of the couch potatoes explode. In the final one, rebels manage to cut off the TV signal, and within minutes, the whole city goes into raving ga-gas.)

The plots have mostly to do with corruption in high places: an attempt to take over all security systems, trafficking in body parts reminiscent of Larry Niven's "organleggers," and--I thought this one particularly witty--terrorists who sell the TV rights to their outrages before they commit them. The show is hard-bitten, cynical, and terribly naive, cynical in that it has all this stuff going on, there are no moral absolutes, and the hero is defending a rather nasty society, but naive in its assumption that all you need is one brave reporter with a live TV camera to bring down the Powers That Be. The government is a matter of ratings, but why the Powers That Be didn't use some of that power to get an Iron-clad grip on the media is not so clear.

One of the characters particularly fascinates me: 15-year-old Bryce Lynch, who comes off as an adolescent Dr. Strangelove. He's the hacker wiz who gets our hero out of many scrapes--and into others--but the role is eerily played by Chris Young, who manages to make the character just a little pathetic.

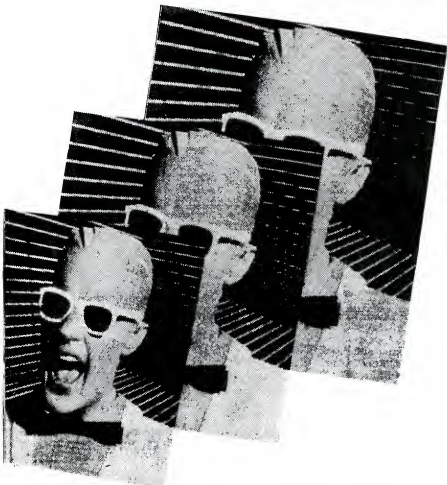
Here's this kid who has not seen his family in years, lives alone in a special suite of the Century 23 TV building surrounded by all sorts of neat machines--some of which have serious, adult implications, but are still toys to him--and without any normal emotional development or social life at all. This kid is a creature of the TV studio, already their leading research and development person, and is going to grow up to be an authentic mad scientist. The fascinating thing about the role, and the way Young plays it, is that it isn't a cartoon when it so easily could be.

That goes for the whole show, too.

And last, something you really must see in re-runs. Harlan Ellison has called *Ice Man* "no less than a shining icon of cinematic High Art," and I finally got an opportunity to discover that he's entirely right. Really, this is one of the great SF films. I'd rate it as high as *Charly*. It is among the strongest human-interest--as opposed to effects-oriented--movies the genre has ever seen.

Fred Schepisi directed. Timothy Hutton plays an anthropologist and John Lone puts in a superb performance as a Neanderthal man who is frozen in the Arctic ice for 30,000 years, until he is discovered and thawed out.

-----continued on page 24



IMMORTALISM:

"The Long-Range View"



Marvin Kaye

PART 5: EPISTLE TO THE HESSEANS

"Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." -- James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

Joyce's stirring resolution points the way. It is not enough to want to live forever; immortalists have to shoulder the responsibility of forging a new ethic, one which recognizes mankind's full potential--our total humanness. Unfortunately, too many cultists embrace principles of spiritual self-abrogation.

Take, for instance, the Hesse phenomenon that afflicted American youth a number of years ago. Trends among young readers swiftly flare and fade; the subtle prose of the 1946 Nobel Prize-winning German author Herman Hesse is already as passe on campus as those ancient idols, Jack Kerouac, J.D. Salinger and William Golding. Yet the Hesse phenomenon is important to study because it reinforced the modish trend in liberal

American thought to espouse Oriental negativism. Ultimately it is all part of that groping of younger minds for straw--meanings beyond Meaning...a quest for ersatz religion to replace the comfortable churches that failed our innocent apostates.

Perhaps Hesse's novel *Steppenwolf* can be written off as a byproduct of the drug culture (itself as much an offshoot of the contemporary spiritual lack of direction as the embracing of Eastern solipsism). But the message of *Siddhartha* as U.S. youngsters understood it can hardly be misconstrued: a young man wandering the world experiments with fleshly pleasures only to find peace by withdrawing from those same pleasures.

In a sprightly and sardonic essay in *Wampeters, Fomaz & Granfaloon*, Kurt Vonnegut Jr. suggests that Hesse's popularity stemmed from his insistence, at least in his early novels, on the genteel homeliness of his protagonists and the futility of any action to alter their predicaments.

Perhaps. But it should be noted that the hero of *Siddhartha* take a very positive course: repudiation of the worldly life. (Very characteristically, he does this only after getting a good long taste of it.) Giving up is an attractive notion to those afraid of life. On the simplest level, you have surely heard the philosophy expounded this way: "This, too, shall pass"--a concept that immortalists are striving to prevent.

"This, too, shall pass" is a poignant pervocation. Fear grows: fear of loss, fear of trusting too much, fear of putting too much emphasis on values and people who may injure in the name of Love. Or hurt merely by going away. So many proclaim "This, too, shall pass" as a declaration of willingness to shunt aside possessions and people rather than accept loss and death. Yet all the while they are mourning the lack of permanency in life, crying for a stability they cannot find.

To some extent, we all are. Ironically, relinquishing the worldly struggle in favor of inner tranquility is an idea contradicted by Herman Hesse himself. The inhumanity of maintaining private ideals while ignoring human suffering is brilliantly, if subtly explored in his savage short novel, *The Journey to the East*. But Hesse became quite explicit in his last major composition, *Das Glasperlenspiel*, variously translated as *Magister Ludi* or *The Glass Bead Game*, a science-fiction masterpiece that, according to translator Theodore Ziolkowski (in the Bantam Books edition), was partly written in protest to the cultish misreadings of Hesse already springing up some four decades ago.

Typically (according to Ziolkowski), *Das Glasperlenspiel* in English was the least popular of the novelist's works amongst the American youth who idolized Hesse years before. Those Hesse adherents to whom I spoke at the time tried to tell me this was because they could not "get at" what Hesse meant in *The Glass Bead Game*. On the contrary, I think subconsciously they understood all too well and could not bear to give up their messiah *malgre' ludi*.

The *Glass Bead Game*, which takes place in a mythical far future, is set in the scholarly province of Castalia, a state where self-centered mental and spiritual perfection is attained at the cost of virtual irrelevance to the outside world. Into Castalia comes the protagonist, the musician Joseph Knecht, a shy, compassionate youth whose diligence to duty, brilliance of thought and singular lack of

ambition attains for him the supreme Castalian office, master of the glass bead game, "Magister Ludi." The scandal of Knecht's later years is that he gives it all up to mingle with humanity and try to help the troubled nation he came from before journeying to Castalia. By resigning as Magister Ludi, Knecht thus affirms the need for recognizing a greater good than self, for accepting the responsibility of all human beings to one another.

The Glass Bead Game is supposedly written by a minor Castalian researcher who often reasserts the Castalian tenet that the individual is not important, only the work accomplished by that same person is significant--a viewpoint that neatly dovetails with the great ego homogenizer, Nirvana. The supreme stylistic irony of *Das Glasperlenspiel* is that the nameless narrator expends enormous effort tracing and describing the life of Joseph Knecht, a man whose personality is far more important than the trivial works he accomplished in his term of office as Magister Ludi.

The Glass Bead Game has an even greater significance to those interested in the origins of the immortalist movement. Broadly stated, Hesse's novel underscores the vital importance of facing life with the full panoply of human potential. Put another way: In Castalia, eating and drinking are mere functions; commerce and raising a family are given up in favor of meditation and the contemplation and manipulation of knowledge without any discernible purpose. It is no accident that Castalians study the great art of earlier times without the ability to produce any themselves. In effect, Hesse is telling us that the disparate faculties of body and mind must be reunited before we can become a great society.

This theme has appeared in a variety of guises in science fantasy. Arthur C. Clarke employed it in *The City and the Stars* to knit up, as it were, the polarized agrarian-urban interests of our contemporary world in an imaginative novel which, like *The Glass Bead Game*, takes place far in the future, a future drastically divided into a city from which no citizen emerges and a primitive society of forest dwellers. The parallel to my own novel (with Parke Godwin), *The Masters of Solitude*, ought to be obvious: *Masters* is concerned with the unification of mind and emotion in order to conquer death and explore other alternatives to Meaning. In Clarke's and Stanley Kubrick's 2001, we were afforded a multimillion-dollar art film that stressed the need of binding together wonder and practicality, subjugating the tool without altogether abandoning it (an idea that was "paid off" in the sequel, 2010).

This recurrent motif might be called "the knitting theme." Its significance for the immortalist is that it provides a philosophy for approaching world without end: in order to survive the future and create a future that we can survive in, we must bind together all elements that define us as human: mind AND heart, self-control AND emotion, meditation AND action. The difficulty is in discovering the proper synthesis and balance. Immortalists must not only seek to unlock the gates of life, they must piece together the disparate wisdoms that, knit together, may enable us to emulate Stephen Daedalus and forge within the smithies of our souls the uncreated conscience of our race.

Next issue: Part 6: "The Gospel According to GBS". □

REVIEWS

BOOKS, ETC.



THE HANDMAID'S TALE by Margaret Atwood (Fawcett Crest, 1987, 395 pp., \$4.95) (ISBN 0-449-21260-2)
Reviewed by Doug Franz

The U.S. publication of *The Handmaid's Tale* in hardcover last year drew accolades for this near-future SF novel from critics both within the SF field and outside it. This first SF novel by veteran mainstream author Margaret Atwood was nominated for the Nebula Award and became a hardcover bestseller. It is now available in paperback, and should be read by every SF fan with a serious interest in the SF form; it is an emotionally powerful and effective novel, even though at the same time I believe it has serious failings as science fiction.

It has often been argued that SF is a more difficult literary form than the mainstream, since a superior work of science fiction must satisfy all the same requirements as must all literature—effectiveness of characterization, mood, theme and setting—while also achieving many qualities unique to SF, such as the creation of a world different from our own, but with sufficient verisimilitude to allow even the most learned and sophisticated reader to suspend disbelief, and unquestioningly enter the world for a short time. It has also often been noted that mainstream authors who choose to make use of the SF form—and there have been many over the years—often create works of literary note which nevertheless fail miserably by the criteria by which SF is usually judged. I believe that Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* provides an excellent example of this phenomenon, for although it is in many ways a brilliant novel, it is also in many ways a very poor science fiction novel.

The novel is best described as Orwell's 1984 rewritten with modern feminist sensibilities. It is set in a near-future in which the United States (or a portion of it) has been

taken over through force by a misogynist, totalitarian regime that has some vague resemblances to today's right-wing Christian fundamentalists. It is effectively told in first-person narrative by a "handmaid," a title given to young women forced to serve as surrogate wombs for the society's aging aristocracy. The narrative primarily chronicles her day-to-day life, with numerous flashbacks to earlier days, both before the new regime and during her indoctrination to the new social structure. The mystery of what has led to this radical change in our society is revealed only slowly (and very incompletely) as the novel progresses.

The novel fails as SF because the narrative and the world it reveals is very consistent on an emotional level, but totally inconsistent, poorly thought out, and unconvincing on a rational level. Atwood has eschewed, and may even be totally ignorant of, the need for an effective near-future SF novel to have logical underpinnings to support its verisimilitude.

It is clear that the details of Atwood's eerie and depressing future world were chosen for their emotional resonance, without logical or thoughtful extrapolation of current trends, and I found this tendency to be both distracting and annoying. To justify the need for "handmaids," Atwood vaguely refers to a rapid decline in the fertility rate caused by some slow build-up of environmental pollutants, which clearly could not have affected fertility so rapidly. Why not a genetically engineered organism getting loose, which if not probably is at least a feasible cause for rapid fertility rate declines. But even more importantly, why is a lowered fertility rate needed at all to justify handmaids? The wives in these aristocratic families in this society are clearly beyond breeding age, so the use of surrogate child-bearers for the male leaders makes sense anyway.

The novel is filled with failures such as this to logically think things through. The leaders in this society seem to believe whatever seems repugnant to Atwood, no matter whether or not it is consistent. Servants with little or no status in the new order support it to a far greater degree than can be explained by fear. The strange and often hideous rituals and mores of the society have the feel of age-old traditions despite having only been established a few years before. There is no mention of religion in this society, despite the fact that fundamentalist Christianity is the only current precedent for many of the beliefs of the new regime. There is virtually no technology visible in this future; Atwood was uncomfortable with technology, so ignored it, leaving the leaders of the U.S.A. maintain their leadership while living in mid-19th-Century living conditions. (The story would indeed have made more sense as an alternate view of 1950 as seen from 1900.)

As a final fatal error, one I think unlikely to be made by an SF veteran, Atwood provides a frame for the for the story in the form of a distracting section early in the novel where the narrator addresses her audience directly, and a final chapter which is the transcript of an academic historical society, one hundred years later, that finds an audio tape containing "The Handmaid's Tale", and dissects it from the viewpoint of it being an artifact of an ancient, little chronicled era in U.S. history. Atwood fails to understand that a reader does not need to know how a narrative (even one in first person) came to exist.

In the final analysis, Atwood has produced an emotionally engaging story, filled with memorable scenes, but not a believable SF story, for SF requires rational as well as emotional underpinnings.

MISERY by Stephen King (Viking Press, 1987, 310 pp., \$18.95) (ISBN 0-670-81364-8)
Reviewed by Mark J. McGarry

Stephen King, who single-handedly resurrected the horror novel as a popular (and profitable) genre, has demonstrated an admirable readiness to push himself beyond that pale. *The Stand*, *Firestarter* and *The Dead Zone* are clearly science fiction, as are the majority of the five books King wrote as Richard Bachman. *Cujo* was a suspense novel and *The Eyes of the Dragon*, released earlier this year, is a rather grim Grimms' fantasy.

Nevertheless, King's identity as "that scary guy" may be written indelibly across the American consciousness. And if King does feel he's being pigeonholed, he has no one to blame but himself. He can't resist the impulse to make the reader squirm, even in the gaily packaged *Eyes of the Dragon*, which had its genesis as a fairy tale told to his daughter at bedtime. And he has not shown a willingness to experiment with style or narrative techniques: in *Misery*, King's voice is identical to that in *Salem's Lot*, published in 1975. He knows how to write a story one way: plainly, close to the bone, and with a bucket of blood here and there.

Another writer of King's creative ability and commercial accomplishment would be content to write his best-selling story over and over. The names of these Johnny One Notes are sprinkled across the best seller lists—Robert Ludlum, Clive Cussler, Craig Thomas, among others—because the public has made it amply clear that what it likes to read is what it read last.

That King is the decade's ablest chronicler of blue-collar life is immaterial to most of his readers, who want first and only to be scared out of their wits. Also beside the point are his experiments with theme and setting; it doesn't matter to most of his audience whether the monster is the shambling horror of *It* or the biological plague of *The Stand*.

But *Misery* is King's greatest departure from what his audience is likely to expect. It is a psychological thriller confined to two characters and one room. It is also a novel about itself.

The protagonist, Paul Sheldon, has written a series of popular romance novels, but now wants to devote himself to "serious fiction." His antagonist is his "number one fan," the embodiment of the audience's conviction that they own not just the author's work, but the author as well.

Sheldon runs his car off a Colorado road in the dead of winter and wakes up days later in a farmhouse owned by an eccentric ex-nurse, Annie Wilkes. Sheldon is in agony, his legs shattered. Wilkes feeds him massive doses of addictive painkillers—and withholding the pills when Sheldon "misbehaves" is only one of the torture techniques in her repertoire.

It's obvious from the start that Wilkes is crazed; King increases the tension by gradually revealing the depth of her insanity. Throughout, Wilkes remains a believable character, a figure who is by turns terrifying

and pathetic.

When Wilkes learns that Sheldon killed off the heroine of his romantic series in his last paperback, Wilkes demands that he resurrect the character, Misery Chastain, in a new novel. Sheldon, crippled and locked in a room in Wilkes's secluded house, must obey her.

Misery is at its best when King is portraying the ambiguity and contradictions of an author's life. Sheldon, who had come to hate his romance series, finds himself growing enthusiastic as he works on *Misery's Return*, and starts to wonder whether his just-completed "adult" novel was really as good as he thought it was. King also strips some of the mystique away from writing, portraying it as more of a knack than an art or a craft.

"There's a million things in this world I can't do," Sheldon thinks, "But if you want me to take you away, to scare you or involve you or make you cry or grin, yeah, I can. I can bring it to you and keep bringing it to you until you holler uncle."

Misery has its excesses, toward the end, when King makes the reader "holler uncle" too long and too loud. As if he has lost confidence in his ability to keep the suspense on a psychological level, King resorts to spasms of violence more graphic than any in his horror novels. It may be what the readers expect, but it is not what *Misery* needs.

Misery remains a strong novel, one that works on several levels: as pure suspense, as an essay on the creative process, and as an experiment in autobiography. It is among King's best novels, and certainly his most ambitious.

King ends *Misery* with the words "Now my tale is told," leaving his readers—for the first time—without a clue of what he will write next. That may be his greatest triumph.

astronomical and cosmological theories; they squirm with glee when confronted by genetic mutations and computer/neuron interfacing. But they hate mathematics. Listen to them tout new books of popular physics: "And the best thing is that the author left out the math."

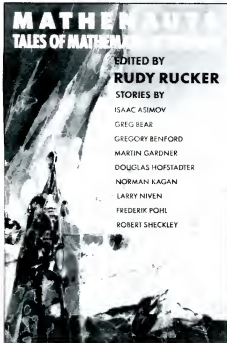
This blind spot is a real shame, because math can stretch the mind into wonderfully weird directions. Check out topology, fractals, n-dimensional geometry or transfinite algebra sometime.

Most science fiction writers either feel the same way, or know their audience. There is very little fiction written about mathematics, but Rudy Rucker is one of the very few authors who regularly does. His novels utilize mathematical concepts with the gonzo gusto that other writers tackle the design of alien anatomy.

For those few who cherish the mathematically strange, Rucker has gathered together math-based short stories to form a stunning new collection. This may be the first collection of math-fiction since Clifton Fadiman's *The Mathematical Magpie* in 1962. Unfortunately, there has been little to collect. As Rucker says in his introduction: "Not only are these stories new, these are all the new math stories I could find."

I won't tell you about any of them, if you are the type of reader these would appeal to, you won't want to know. If you aren't, you won't care. Suffice to say that among the writers collected herein are Isaac Asimov, Greg Bear, Martin Gardner, Ian Watson, Larry Niven, Robert Sheckley, Frederick Pohl, Gregory Benford, and (unashamedly, and thankfully) Rudy Rucker. These names you know. There are names you should know, but probably don't, such as Douglas Hofstadter, and names no one knows, such as Anatoly Dnieprov and the incomparable Norman Kagan.

If you already know that math can be incredibly mind-blowing fun, then you will have stopped reading this a paragraph or two back, and are disappearing down the street toward the nearest bookstore. If not, try it anyway. You just might discover something new and marvelously strange.



MATHENAUTS, edited by Rudy Rucker (Arbor House, 1987, 300 pp., \$7.95) (ISBN 0-87795-890-4)

Reviewed by Stephen P. Brown

Science fiction readers love science. They bubble over with enthusiasm about the latest advances in particle physics, or new

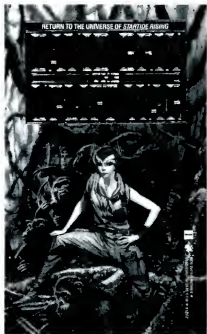
THE UPLIFT WAR by David Brin (Bantam, 1987, 638 pp., \$4.50) (ISBN 0-553-25121-X)
Reviewed by Eugene Lin

Of all the major writers to emerge during the '80s, David Brin is perhaps the one most in the classic mold. No one could call him a Post-Modern; if anything, he is reactionary in the best sense of the word. His 1983 novel, *Startide Rising*, won the Hugo and Nebula awards, and rightly so. Brin's novel, told in his clean and fluid prose, was an ideal combination of idea fiction and space opera, and one of the very few sense-of-wonder novels that work for even longtime SF readers. (Clarke's *Rendezvous With Rama*, I think, is another.) Two other novels followed *Startide Rising*: *The Postman*, an elegant post-holocaust story that won the John W. Campbell Memorial Award; and the Nebula-nominated *The Heart of the Comet* (co-written with Greg Benford), which was more than an attempt to capitalize on Halley's Comet. Clearly, Brin should be getting more press; in his own way, he is as "hot" as Gibson and Shepard are. Brin's newest novel, *The Uplift War*, is set in the same universe as *Startide Rising*, but Brin is basing its marketing strategy solely on this fact, and expectations are running high. They will be deflated, for though this long novel will line Brin's pockets, it will do little for his reputation.

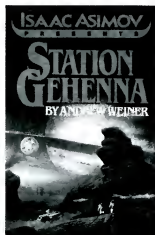
The focus of *The Uplift War* is shifted from the fen of *Startide* to the uplifted chimpanzees ("chims"), and the planet is now Garth instead of Kithrup. As the dolphin-crowded Steaker of the previous novel flees from the many Galactic patron races with its galaxy-shaking discovery, the alien Gubru seize the planet Garth as a hostage to coerce Earth into yielding the secrets of the Progenitors. Garth is home to a large population of chims as well as a number of other surprises. The daughter of a Tymbrini ambassador and the son of the planetary coordinator lead a guerrilla band of chims against the Gubru occupation force, while the Gubru plot an Uplift coup and Earth is besieged. It all makes for a sweeping space opera, dramatic throughout its 638 pages—the climax is one of the most extravagant widescreen spectacles in years.

Though Brin's novel is not humorous in its intent, its clockwork as predicated on a Tymbrini ambassador's sense of humor. Brin's complex plot is based almost entirely on a series of practical jokes with unintended outcomes and a few remarkable coincidences—the plot would fall apart if a single practical joke turned out differently. Brin realizes the brittleness of his plot and has his Tymbrini joker suggest that it's all due to the fact that the Universe is more surprising than we can imagine: "even the most imaginative of us could have made this up in his own mind." Brin has made it up, and it doesn't work. Add to this some sleazy puns, and you have a novel that is far less intelligent than *Startide Rising*. It also lacks the depth of the previous novel: the chims are not as well portrayed as the fen, and Garth is a cardboard planet in comparison to Kithrup. For all its length, it is less ambitious than the shorter *Startide Rising*. And sense of wonder? You won't find it here, amidst practical jokes, guerrilla warfare, Machiavellian machinations, and a dearth of ideas.

The novel does pose serious questions about the nature of the Uplift system



itself--questions which are never answered in Brin's pat conclusion. Apparently, these questions are left for a later (and hopefully greater) novel, as is the question of the Streaker's secret. Apparently, the Uplift series will continue, as it should. **Startide Rising** (though it is actually the second novel in the series) is the Gateway to the Uplift series, and **The Uplift War** is an important interlude. It is also a very enjoyable interlude, if, insured by long exposure, one does not find the auctorial contrivances too bothersome. The Uplift series is shaping up to be one of SF's great sagas, and if only for that reason alone, you should read this latest installment.



STATION GEHENNA by Andrew Weiner (Congdon & Weed, 1987, 224 pp., \$15.95) (ISBN 0-86553-191-9)
Reviewed by Doug Fritz

Andrew Weiner's first novel appears as one of the first books in the new "Isaac Asimov Presents" line, a series intended to feature "writers who are destined to become the top names of tomorrow," and edited by the Davis Publications (IASFM) staff. (I have been pleased to note this new trend in SF publishing of actually touting the publishing of promising new writers, a trend obviously created by the enormous success of the new Ace Specials.) Weiner may indeed be one of tomorrow's stars, and **Station Gehenna** is certainly a successful, if not spectacular, first novel.

Weiner has been producing some very well-written short SF over the past few years, such as "The News From D Street" last year. **Station Gehenna** is indeed a novel developed out of a shorter work published in F&SF. It is a solid addition to the SF-murder-mystery subgenre, due more to Weiner's solid writing abilities and fine execution than any breath-taking, hard-SF sense of wonder.

Station Gehenna takes place hundreds of years in the future on an isolated terraforming station on the apparently lifeless planet, Gehenna. The narrative begins after one of the six people manning the station is found dead, an apparent suicide, and the protagonist, a corporate psychologist posing as the new recreation coordinator, is sent to covertly assess the situation. He slowly discovers the causes of the mysterious happenings at Gehenna Station, which end up involving both the crew and the planet itself.

The ending is a little too predictable, and

Weiner is forced to pull a few extra rabbits out of hats to keep it from being too much so. But Weiner has debuted with a quiet, wholly successful murder mystery of the type that can only be done as science fiction.

REPLAY by Ken Grimwood (Arbor House, 1987, 311 pp., \$17.95) (ISBN 0-87795-781-9)
Reviewed by Stephen P. Brown

Every so often a mainstream writer dabbles in an SF cliché. Most of the time these books are rather embarrassing, but occasionally they can be wonderful surprises. Ken Grimwood tackles the if-I-could-live-my-life-over idea in **Replay**, and brings to this decrepit concept a fresh and engaging viewpoint. He also writes with a smooth and detailed flow of background and characterization that is taken for granted in the least of mainstream books, but so often eludes any but the very best SF writers.

Jeff Winston dies of a heart attack in the first paragraph at age 44, in 1988. He awakens in his college dorm in his eighteen year old body in 1962. Grimwood carries the character through the entire panoply of wish-fulfillment tropes: he bets on the Kentucky Derby, and a few sporting upsets, and parleys the small fortune into investments in the usual obvious choices. Time goes by, and Winston ends up richer than any human ought to be. Then he reaches 1988, and age 44, and dies again. He awakens in his eighteen year old body....

This is where the novel really begins to grab interest. Winston replays over and over again the same (roughly, but the accurate number is an integral plot element, so I will leave it at "roughly") 26 years. He is given the opportunity to try many different things with his life, and does so. Eventually he finds a woman who is also replaying, and their love affair becomes wonderfully complicated.

This is the kind of book no self-respecting SF writer would attempt. And it's a good thing, too. If, say, Greg Bear were writing **Replay**, he'd try to explain it all. Grimwood never does. What is happening is simply a given, and the focus remains on the mental gamut Grimwood runs his characters through. There is perhaps too much theorizing on the meaning of life, which hits some fairly trite points, but Grimwood wisely keeps kicking the narrative drive back in.

All in all, **Replay** is a hell of a lot of fun and worth picking up when it hits paperback.



CIRCUIT BREAKER by Melinda M. Snodgrass (Berkley, 1987, 263 pp., \$2.95) (ISBN 0-425-09776-5)
Reviewed by Dean R. Lambe

Once again the non-heroes of **Circuit Breaker**, Judge Cabot Huntington and Jenny, his girl Thursday, are off Earth to bring the joys of American jurisprudence to impudent colonialists. In this sequel, the sands of Mars are blessed with complete disregard for the Canons of Ethics, in a dispute between Mormons who want to terraform the pink planet and a bunch of radical environmentalists. Unfortunately, the plot of **Circuit Breaker** has all the vitality of a traffic ticket, and basic physics takes a recess for hot pants and busy briefs.

Snodgrass' editors, who are supposed to be helping this new writer, continue to let her ape 40-year-old Heinlein stories with technical gaffs as big as a Saturn 5. While in cislunar space her goofs weren't so bad, but when the judge stops bumping the hired help on Mars long enough to phone home, let's be serious here! Think you can hold a phone conversation between Mars and Earth, or Mars and an asteroid? Under the best of circumstances, say about once a decade, you'll have enough time to dry your nails between the, "Hi, Joe, how's the little woman?" and "Fine, thanks, yours?" Usually there'll be plenty of time between sentences to get your hair done and shop.

OK, so Berkeley's editors and Snodgrass don't find anything funny about pump shotguns, basketball courts or cathedral pipe organs in Mars' gravity, and have lasers shoot lasers through thick smoke without batting an eyelash. So let's talk bookish things. Does anybody read copy at Berkeley anymore? Granted, some of those typos are cute--"poplar ice caps" I particularly liked, and I suppose some New Yorkers do think that Leland Stanford Jr. University is spelled "Stanford." But shouldn't some editor have raised the tiniest quibble about major characters named Jenny and Jeanne, not to mention the spear carriers named Jasper, Jillian, Julie, Jana, Jared, and another Jennifer? This is how a writer should begin a career?

Of course, I'd expect Berkeley's editors to let lines slide by like "Women were more deeply affected by such joinings...." but one wonders about that dark Eurasian woman with "pink nipples."

I'm not much into subtexts, but an editorial pencil should have been raised at new meanings for the acronyms POW/MIA and that sharp alert at Nicaragua in the middle of the book.

In short, a striking initial premise about the similarities between Utah and Mars curdled into a waste of time, a laughingstock. I won't bother with the third book. Perhaps you could direct Ms. Snodgrass to the door marked "fantasy?"



THE NET by Loren J. MacGregor (Ace, 1987, 225 pp., \$2.95) (ISBN 0-441-56941-2)
Reviewed by Eugene Lin

It is an unusual thing for a writer's first published SF work to be a novel. Samuel Delany, an unusually talented writer, broke into the field with a novel. 25 years later, Loren MacGregor has done the same thing, with an Ace SF Special that is somewhat similar to one of Delany's later novels, *Nova*. Unfortunately, the similarity is in plot only; MacGregor has some way to go before his name can be grouped with his fellow Ace Special debutants.

The Net is a space opera of crime and revenge among the rich and decadent. The main character, Jason Horluchi, is the head of Horluchi, Pte., the largest privately owned conglomerate in the universe. Jason is not satisfied with a desk job; instead she buys a ship and becomes an adventurer and thief, stealing genes for fun. Her adversary is Alecko Papandreou, the heir apparent to Papandreou & Cie, Horluchi's closest rival. Alecko has found out about Jason's crimes and puts forth this challenge: if Jason can steal a certain gem from the Papandreou museum, which is protected by a security system designed by Alecko himself, Alecko will withdraw from any businesses their respective companies hold in common. If Jason fails, she must withdraw. Jason, of course, takes up the challenge, and the resulting shenanigans take up the rest of the novel.

MacGregor's novel fails as a space opera. In a role reversal, it is the plot which is the poor relation here. The central impetus of the plot is highly contrived, resting entirely on the idea that the super-rich resort to crime and elaborate contests in the pursuit of power and happiness—never taking the path of least resistance. The maneuvering of the antagonists is drawn out, giving MacGregor the opportunity to inductively present aspects of his interesting, but never fully realized milieu, which includes the Net (a network of shared and heightened senses), Le Guin's Gethnians, and corporal punishment (whipping). When Jason finally does make her move, it is with an uninspired technological fix. At this point, the novel has already degenerated into an eye-for-an-eye revenge tale. **The Net** is not, as they say, a read—though it was probably intended as such.

Plot aside, MacGregor shows real promise. He is a fine stylist, and many of his characterizations are excellent, particularly in delineating the complex relationships among Jason's crew. **The Net** is a good debut,

considering that it is MacGregor's first published fiction in any form or field. In time, MacGregor may very well be a major writer—his talent is very evident—but, by the yardstick of the previous Specials, **The Net** just doesn't measure up.

TO SAIL BEYOND THE SUNSET by Robert A. Heinlein (Putnam, 1987, 416 pp., \$18.95) (ISBN 0-399-13267-8)
Reviewed by Fernando G. Gouveia

Heinlein's latest continues his exploration of his fictional worlds, using the idea of several parallel universes (called "timelines") to unify all of his novels, and in particular to allow him to include many of his favorite characters in one world-spanning story. Most of his books in this sequence (which includes **Time Enough for Love**, **The Number of the Beast**, and **The Cat Who Walks Through Walls**—but seems more and more to be planned to spend on the reader's previous knowledge of the characters. This book is largely an exception, though there are numerous references to the other works throughout (indexed in the back of the book.) As a result, it turns out to be one of the more interesting of Heinlein's recent books.

The book consists of the memoirs of Maureen Johnson, the mother of Lazarus Long, who, as faithful Heinlein readers will know, was brought to the future at the moment of her supposed death, rejuvenated, and united with the happy family of Heinlein characters. (All of this in **Time Enough for Love**, though more and more characters were added to the group in later books.) As the book begins, Maureen is involved in a typical initial situation for the last few Heinlein books: she finds herself in an unknown place, with a dead person at her side, and is soon deep in trouble with the local authorities. In prison, and hoping for rescue, she records her memoirs, beginning with her childhood in the late 19th century.

The memoirs make for interesting reading. Though Maureen and her father are typical Heinlein protagonists, the situations are basically those of everyday life. For most of the book, she concerns herself with marriage, sex, children and money. This, of course, gives Heinlein the chance to preach his usual sermons, but is still quite interesting, especially since most of the book takes place in the early 20th century, and in a region Heinlein knows well. The alternate history of the 20th century is fascinating, though incredibly optimistic (it follows the chronology laid down in the "future history" stories.) It is only at the end that Maureen is rescued (again atypically, since she is essentially passive throughout) and we are back to the usual happy congregation of "competent people," the "Circle of Ouroboros." At the very end, in a way that parallels the conclusion of **The Cat Who Walks Through Walls**, one more character is rescued from the past and added to the pantheon.

Readers of **The Cat Who Walked Through Walls** will be happy to know that the outcome of the almost-cliffhanger at the end of the book is (fully?) revealed here. However, it is simply mentioned in passing, in a way that left at least this reader very unsatisfied: I would prefer him either to leave the ending open (which is clearly impossible, given Heinlein's project of reunifying everybody that matters: "Mike" must be one of the happy

crowd) or to give a full, dramatic account of what went on. Maybe that account is still to come. The ending of this book has an air of finality that suggests that Heinlein is about ready to go on to new things.

Those who have read and enjoyed the "future history" stories will enjoy all the internal references to that group of stories, but the book is accessible without such a background (which, I feel, was not true for **The Cat**.) Though Heinlein has written better books in the past, this one is better than most of his recent work. It is slow and preachy at times, there is the usual excessive preoccupation with sex, and the ideas are the usual Heinlein fare, but it is mostly about real situations and everyday life, and is a pleasant surprise for those who had given up on Heinlein completely: not great, but quite adequate.

The ending clearly suggests that this might be Heinlein's last book. His contribution to the field has been immense, and his willingness to try something new with each book, even when it produced failures, is an example for others of the grand old men of SF to follow. This book caps his career with a warm look at his beginnings, the future history series, and it is recommended mainly for that reason.



WYRMS by Orson Scott Card (Arbor House, 1987, 263 pp., \$16.95) (ISBN 0-87795-894-7)
Reviewed by Ardath Mayhar

Every time I find myself thinking that Card has stretched to his limits, taking science fiction into realms of character and capacity that it seldom attains, he comes up with something that shows me I'm wrong. And in **Wyrms** he has taken a fairly standard concept and made it illuminate aspects of humanity that seldom find themselves in the spotlight, particularly in these hedonistic days.

There are many layers of meaning in this book. The surface story is a tense one. Patience, 13 years old at the beginning of the book and only 15 when it ends, is the daughter of a slave—a slave who is the rightful Heptarch of the realm. She has been trained by her tutor, Angel, at her father's behest, to become a diplomat of the highest



calibre, as is her father.

Trained as an assassin (a necessary adjunct to diplomacy, even in our own milieu), she picks her way with precise care among the traps and puzzles laid out for her, not only by her father and her tutor, but also by the Heptarch, whom she serves. This ruler, knowing himself to be wrongfully in his position, has nothing but suspicion concerning the loyalties of Lord Peace and his daughter. The fact that they quite earnestly mean to serve him well and faithfully is lost on him, for he has no capacity to understand the credo of Lord Peace.

The well-being of the entire world is the concern of its ruler. The Heptarch is doing a good job, as it stands. Lord Peace is accomplishing things that he could not do as Heptarch. Self-interest is no part of a real monarch, and it is this aspect of the characters of Peace and Patience that frustrates and infuriates their ruler.

Beneath the story of the end of Peace and the journey of his daughter and her strange companions toward the subliminal call that has taken the Wise of the world away to the place where the Unwrym, sole survivor of a native species, lives, runs a network of lives and circumstances and philosophies.

Each character in the book has a place that could be filled by no other. Each has his or her function in the final outcome of the journey and the plan made by those desperate people who make it.

Many presently unpopular attributes are shown to be the very things that give mankind its unusual capacities. Selflessness—not whimsiness, but genuine concern for things greater than oneself—is the secret of the power of the real rulers of this world. Self-discipline, toughness, the ability to ignore both pain and personal wants and needs are the sole reasons why Patience achieves her goals, though at a terrible price in suffering and humiliation.

Beneath the profound statements inherent in the plot runs a wealth of fascinating detail: the organic technology that has been developed because of the destruction of the world's iron; the talking heads, preserved to advise the living with the skills and wisdom of the dead; the religious background, which was the purpose of the colonization of the world in the beginning, yet whose Greek Orthodox details have been lost or altered with time.

In particular, there is real pleasure in seeing Card's skilled uses of the Greek-based terminology in this world. As he did with Portuguese in *Speaker for the Dead*, he adds dimension to his people and his planet

through deft use of language.

Perhaps the most moving part of the story is the discovery of the roots of the species living together in uneasy truce. This is done in a most unusual way, using an intriguing genetic concept, and it ends the book on a triumphant note that should give us, as human beings, something to think about in our own dealings with those of other kinds.

This is a remarkable book, whose surface aspects are only the beginning of the riches to be derived from reading it.

UNIVERSE 17 edited by **Terry Carr** (Doubleday, 1987, 180 pp., \$12.95) (ISBN 0-385-23853-3)

Reviewed by Fernando Q. Gouvea

The latest, and one must assume also the last, volume in Terry Carr's prestigious "Universe" series is in fact quite typical: it is a strong collection, well worth the attention of those who follow short SF. This time there are

fewer (six), but longer, stories, by both new and well-known writers.

The highlights of the volume are the longer stories, particularly Jack McDevitt's "In the Tower", an effective and passionate story which transcends the "space adventure" tradition from which it grows. James Tiptree Jr. contributes a story about contact with an alien race and its effect on humanity. "Second Going" is good but not exceptional, especially considering Tiptree's previous accomplishments.

Marta Randall contributes a story with a wonderfully imagined world but a plot that is, in the end, unconvincing. Cherie Wilkerson, in "The Man Who Watched the Glaciers Run," gives us a concretized metaphor: the person who lives on a slower timescale, for whom glaciers visibly move.

All the stories here are quite good, even if none of them seem to be completely satisfying, usually because of the lack of good, natural conclusions. Still, the stories here are

AUDIO SF&F REVIEWS by David F. Hamilton

I recently listened to two tapes which delineate the extreme ends of the audio SF spectrum. The first is a simple, direct recording of an author reading his work at a convention. The second is an example of high-tech gimmickry trying to conceal an essentially weak story.

"PORTRAITS OF HIS CHILDREN" by George R.R. Martin (Peripheral Visions Productions, 4450 Lakeshore Road, Manistee MI 49660, \$8.95 postpaid)

"Portraits of His Children" is a stunningly powerful story (it was a finalist for the Hugo, and won the Nebula), an example of a great writer working at the top of his form. As such, it needs little in the way of accompaniment. A live convention recording with no background music or other gimmicks allows the listener to concentrate on the words—which is as it should be with a story of this intensity.

I am partial to tapes where the author does the reading, as opposed to those using professional actors. The author's rendition, while not as polished as an actor's, gives the listener a chance to hear the story exactly as the writer intended. Professional actors tend to add their own ideas to the story by accenting and emphasizing sections that affected them most.

"Portraits of His Children" is a perfect story for an author's reading. George R.R. Martin's less-than-polished speaking voice provides a starker, grittier feel to the recording, which is just perfect for this hauntingly evocative novella. "Portraits of His Children" is a story about the art of writing, and the special relationship that an author had with his creations.

As such, it is a deeply personal experience for Martin, who had undoubtedly wrestled long and hard with many of the same demons that his protagonist, Richard Cantling, must face in the story. You can hear it in his voice, which cracks with sadness or flares with rage during the most deeply emotional scenes. Listening to this tape you can feel Martin's love for his creation, which only serves to further emphasize the point of the story itself.

I'm sure you'll find yourself listening to it over and over, as I have.

This cassette is strictly a small press release, and probably will not be around for long, so do yourself a favor and order it now.

STEPHEN KING'S "THE MIST" (Simon & Schuster/Audioworks, Rockefeller Center, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10020, \$9.95) (ISBN 0-671-62138-6)

At first glance, this would seem to be the perfect combination. Stephen King, the unquestioned master of contemporary popular horror fiction, a cast of professional actors, and the advanced technology of the Kunstkopf binaural sound system (3-D sound). So why is this such an unequivocal disaster?

Much of the blame must fall on the choice of material. "The Mist" is, at best, minor King. Simon & Schuster would do well to remember that all the technical wizardry in the world cannot make up for the lack of a good story. "The Mist" is chock-full of unresolved plot devices, and never really draws the listener in. We are introduced to creatures in the mist, but we never find out what they are. There is the mysterious Arrowhead Project, which is never fully explained. Finally there is the mist itself, which comes up out of nowhere and is never explained during the course of the story.

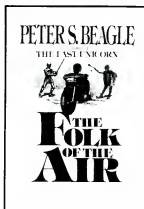
Secondly, the Kunstkopf system still needs work. It sounds great on headphones, but if you try to listen to this tape through normal speakers, the voices are mixed so low as to be virtually inaudible.

The binaural sound system has incredible potential. It can eventually become to audio tape what special effects have become to film. It can add a whole new dimension of enjoyment to a story. However, just as great special effects cannot make a bad film good, the Kunstkopf system cannot overcome the limitations of a weak story. Given Stephen King's preoccupation for '80s rock music, it is not surprising that he would lend his story to a production which draws much of its inspiration from the sound effects sensibilities of early Pink Floyd (listen to "Ummagumma" or "Atom Heart Mother" and you will hear 3-D sound in its infancy). "The Mist," like much of the music of that ilk, leaves one shaking his head and saying, "Wow, those are some pretty weird sounds, but what does it all mean?" □

universe
17

NOVELS, SCIENCE FICTION

certainly well above the level of usual SF fare, and fans of short SF should seek it out.



THE FOLK OF THE AIR by Peter S. Beagle (Del Rey, 1986, 330 pp., \$16.95) (ISBN 0-345-33782-4)
Reviewed by David L. Transue

Peter S. Beagle's latest fantasy offering, *The Folk of the Air*, is a captivating novel filled with characterizations so incisively honed that, before the novel's completion, we feel as if we've actually lived alongside the characters as friends.

The novel begins with Farrell, an insouciant transient who returns to the town of Avicenna garlanded with nostalgic memories of his youth and home to his oldest friend, Ben, and his sometimes girlfriend, Julie. Ben now inexplicably lives with an unattractive old woman named Sia whom Farrell finds to be more than she appears, enshrouded in mysteries and an aura insinuating powers beyond comprehension, potentialities that freed the universe in its inception.

Julie is an active member in the League For Archaic Pleasures, a group that playsacts the events, speech and mannerisms of medieval chivalry. As Julie and Farrell are caught up in the League's events, Farrell becomes aware that Ben occasionally acts in bizarre, uncharacteristic fashions and eventually learns that he's possessed.

Things grow even more disturbing when Farrell chances upon Alfie, a 15-year-old witch, at one of the League's events and uneasily observes her interacting with Nicholas Bonner, a nonentity cast into limbo five centuries before.

Beagle is a master at painting characters that are alive and breathing, whose

personalities draw us ever deeper into the novel. Yet his greatest strength and weakness are, simultaneously, metaphors. His comparisons are acute and powerful, but their sheer profusion, one metaphor shot with honed precision after another, weakens them collectively and eventually makes the novel a tiresome exercise of competing metaphors that diminishes the interaction of the characters and grinds the pacing to a halt.

If Beagle could learn control over his own magical power of evoking superlative imagery, future novels will demonstrate all the more effectively just how exceptional a stylist he is.

LINCOLN'S DREAMS by Connie Willis (Bantam Spectra, 1987, hardcover, \$15.95)
Reviewed by Fernando Q. Gouvea

There are some books for which a plot summary is completely useless; their effect depends more on how the story is told, rather than on the details of what happens when. Connie Willis's first solo novel is such a book, and an exceptionally good one.

The story centers on a woman, Annie, who is having dreams that somehow seem to recall the events of the Civil War. The dreams distress her and she seeks help, first from a specialist in sleep disorders, and then from the book's narrator, who is a Civil War historian currently working as researcher, assistant and general errand boy for a well-known historical novelist. The book's plot springs from his attempts to help Annie and the relationship that develops between them.

Willis handles her theme with subdued intensity, and quietly contrives to engage the reader; one learns to know and love the characters, and leaves the book with memories of real people and of their real pain. This is a special book which is apt to be lost in the shuffle, its quiet but penetrating voice drowned out by the shrillness of most of what is written in the genre. It is up to the readers to seek it out and give it the recognition it deserves.



THE YEAR BEFORE YESTERDAY by Brian Aldiss (Franklin Watts, 1987, 256 pp., \$16.95) (ISBN 0-531-15040-2)
Reviewed by Neal Wilgus

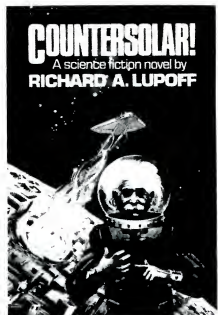
The Year Before Yesterday, although marketed as a new novel in the tradition of Aldiss' *Report on Probability A*, is actually two old short novels stitched together with some new material not organically related to either. For the record, the reprints are *Equator*, first published in *NEW WORLDS* in 1958 and later issued as an Ace Double called

Vanguard From Alpha, and *The Impossible Smile*, first published in *SCIENCE FANTASY* in 1965 under the pseudonym Jael Cracken.

The bridge material stitching things together concerns a Scandinavian composer in a Nazi-dominated alternate world who finds a dead body along the road on his way home. He also finds, in her possession, two paperback SF novels (maybe-myths, he calls them) which he decides to read while waiting for the police, and later while the police investigation is taking place. This new material is the best-written and most interesting part of the book.

The Impossible Smile takes place in a different Nazi-dominated alternate world and tells the plodding story of a telepath who goes to the moon, becomes a cyborg and tries to use his powers to oppose the dictatorship. In *Equator*, an alien colony is allowed to settle in Sumatra and our thick-witted hero chases around ineffectually trying to expose an invasion that doesn't happen anyway.

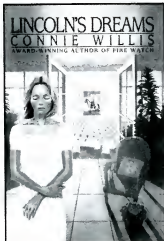
I liked *Report on Probability A*, and I wish *The Year Before Yesterday* was half as good, a tenth as original. But these are poorly done formula fictions that should have been left in oblivion, not honored with hardcover preservation. Franklin Watts is bringing out some excellent new (and old) titles, but this is not one of them.



COUNTERSOLAR! by Richard Lupoff (Arbor House, 1987, 293 pp., \$16.95) (ISBN 0-87795-858-0)
Reviewed by Pascal J. Thomas

Lupoff is a much better writer than one could tell from the string of pastiches he has perpetrated over the years. *Countersolar!* is the sequel to *Circumpolar!*, a grand spoof of Edgar Rice Burroughs, in particular the Pellucidar novels. Without being hollow, the Earth has a hole at the Pole, because it really has the shape of a doughnut. In this alternate universe, the continents we are accustomed to are spread conformally over the "upper" hemidoughnut, while a range of fabulous lands, including Mu and the pseudo-Germanic Svartalfheim, occupy the other half.

Circumpolar! was about a race around the doughnut, to the other side and back,



pitting an American team of Lindbergh, Amelia Earhart and Howard Hughes against a German-Russian team-- the European powers having remained allies after the One Year War of 1912. The Germans were of pulp novel stock, stereotyped and repulsive. In *Countersolar!*, they have not grown any better with time. It's 1942, a new war has not broken out, but peace is strained by the rise of dictatorships. The abominable German engineers have found shelter in Argentina to cook up their atomic arships, soon to be used in a race across the Solar System, to Earth's hidden twin planet behind the sun.

This sequel also features an all-star cast, with Juan and Eva Peron on the baddies' side; Jack Northrop, Albert Einstein, and a couple of baseball players with the forces of good, who are working to counter an atomic threat on the capitals of each of the United States of Counter-Earth. It sounds like a comic-book idea, but Lupoff pulls it off much better than the contributors to the *Wild Cards* anthology series.

While Peron is a complex bad guy, hesitating between ridicule and bravado, the real hero of the story is the ever gentle and philosophical Einstein. Lupoff makes the best of the character, whether he gives his modest moral to the story or unravels the fantastic explanations to the various happenings in the novel, which plays two parallel Earths against one another. His presence (and that of F.D. Roosevelt, in ways I'll let you discover) validates the deeper nature of the fight being waged-- with freedom at stake. All of this makes *Countersolar!* a fun read and a much more thoughtful and satisfying book than the first novel.

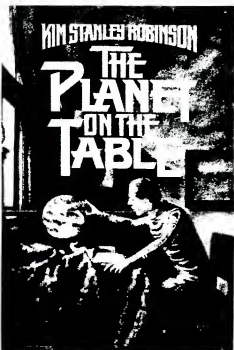


VERGIL IN AVERNO by Avram Davidson (Doubleday, 1987, 184 pp., \$12.95) (ISBN 0-385-19707-1)
Reviewed by Pascal J. Thomas

Science fiction set against the backdrop of the Roman Empire has a modest tradition (grandfathered by Sprague de Camp's *Lost Darkness Fall*) which has relied often on the intrusion of a truckload of gadgets from the future, or alien races. That is not Davidson's way-- seldom does a science fiction writer rely so much on discourse rather than content. Davidson's protagonist is Vergil, a professional scholar given to meanderings and reminiscences. When Vergil finds himself in the employ of the Magnates of the Very Rich City of Averno, it comes as no surprise that he should quickly be pitted against them. Indeed, if Averno is rich, none of its riches will ever defend beauty, truth or happiness. For all its ties to the Roman Empire, Averno is

more like a Dickensian or Marxian 19th century industrial nightmare, lost in the fumes of a thousand kilns. There is some technological anachronism here, and the source of so much power is both a symbol of evil and the practical problem which brings the Magnates to request Vergil's help (if only to disregard his conclusions.) In an absolutely hilarious scene, Vergil gives a lecture with the help of transparencies and an overhead projector, sort of, a good 1900 years before the golden age of that technique.

Of course, the definition loses sharpness, due to materials of the time. Much remains obscure to the reader for some time. One has to bear with Davidson, follow his inimitable voice. I didn't mind it a minute.



THE PLANET ON THE TABLE by Kim Stanley Robinson (Tor Books, 1987, 241 pp., \$3.50) (ISBN 0-812-55237-7)
Reviewed by Pascal J. Thomas

Robinson may owe to his novels his recent notoriety, but his work as a short fiction writer is long-standing, and this collection (now available in paperback) is a welcome reminder of the fact. It offers a remarkable diversity of theme, background, style, and--let's face it--quality. "Coming Back to Dixieland" or "The Disguise," the oldest stories in the volume, do not display the maturity Robinson has now reached, and are missing the complexity of "Mercurial" or the conceptual originality of "The Lucky Strike."

If one can pick out an underlying unifying theme beneath this diversity, it would be that of falsification--half-way between Philip K. Dick's obsession for the genuine object, and Gene Wolfe's play with memory--the idea is central to three-quarters of the stories. "All these bizarre distortions from the real..." is the way the author has James Joyce's statue put it in his very funny introduction. They range over disguises in "The Disguise," where a tragic actor just plays too well; replays of history, to a greater or lesser extent ("The Lucky Strike" or "Black Air" respectively); or more or less well-intentioned reconstitution of a past art form ("Coming Back to Dixieland,"

"Mercurial.")

Can an art form ever belong to the past, anyway? While Robinson states in his introduction his concern for "the esthetic problems of his time," he has elsewhere declared himself as a writer of "historically engaged fiction;" as we all do, he must go back to our common cultural past to establish his esthetic canon. As in his novels, as in "Venice Drowned," images of the past must be dredged out to keep the present alive. The worst fate of all, from that point of view, is that of those who lose their memory, no matter how happy they can be in the present ("Ridge Running").

Esthetic strains of all origins all intertwine in this book (and it can be very playfully, as in the Sherlock Holmes allusions in "Mercurial.") Their promise are many, and careful reading will keep them.



THE MAKER OF DUNE by Frank Herbert and Timothy O'Reilly (Berkley, 1987, 288 pp., \$7.95) (ISBN 0-425-08875-4)
Reviewed by July A. Jolly

The Maker of Dune sheds light on the mind behind the *Dune* series, on the mind that created the Sandworms, the Bene Gesserit, the Tlulku and all the rest. It also speaks to Frank Herbert's other works, both fiction and non-fiction. Although the essays and interviews might not provide answers to every question the reader might have regarding Herbert and his much admired works, as co-author O'Reilly says: "It is hoped they provide clues with whose aid the enterprising reader can hope to trace (without unraveling) some of the myriad threads that make up the cloth on which Frank's stories are so lavishly embroidered."

Lavish, embroidered, sheer intensity--these are words to describe Herbert's art. His fiction occupies the other end of the spectrum from the simple-minded, plot-weary SF churned out on a conveyor belt for money alone.

For example, Herbert quotes Paul Sears: "Ecology is the understanding of consequences." In Herbert's work, this thesis arises again and again, for he understood that ecology isn't merely radicals protesting the demise of snail races; ecology is nothing less than humans accepting their responsibility for the consequences of every major and minor action they take. In *Dune*, Herbert addresses this thesis in a different form. Instead of man impacting on his planet, the planet impacts on man. The humans change to accommodate their world.

Much more lies within the pages of *The Maker of Dune*. Whether the topic is writing, messiahs, ecology, *Dune* or the future, Herbert and O'Reilly's book will delight and intrigue the reader with fascinating,



DAWN by Octavia Butler (Warner Books, 1987, 264 pp., \$15.95) (ISBN 0-446-51363-6)
Reviewed by Pascal J. Thomas

Moving away from her Paternist future (and past), Butler has embarked upon a new series, again exploring strong biological themes and relationships within human groups.

The human race is both intelligent and hierarchical; that's the problem with it, and that's what makes it interesting—at least to the Oankali, extra-terrestrials who arrive after a nuclear war, in time to pick up the pieces of humankind. In more ways than one, for they mean to re-model the race, and genetically "trade" with it to create a new species. This program, as one can guess, is not viewed favorably by the human survivors they have gathered, even Lilith, the protagonist, who is a black woman, although one thoroughly bleached out by Warner's art department. (My irritation at the publisher's ill-treatment of Butler covers is lessened this time by the fact that Lilith's background is not as relevant to the novel as the fact that she is chosen to coordinate a group of humans, essentially to be a leader on the Oankali's behalf.)

Butler gives a fine study of the vitiated leadership situation that ensues, of Lilith's efforts and pains. Her lack of sympathy for the Oankali's plan does not prevent her from loving some of them; and this does not bring her sympathy from her fellow humans.

Dawn manages to be involving, despite having made a clean slate of any past or contemporary social concerns (thus renouncing the resonances present in *Kindred* or *Wild Seed*, Butler's best works); it maintains the ambiguity of the role of the Oankali and their proposed goal. The "Xenogenesis" series has been designed as a trilogy, and Dawn sets up more problems than it resolves; it's an auspicious start.

THE UNCONQUERED COUNTRY by Geoff Ryman (Bantam, 1987, 131 pp., \$2.95) (ISBN 0-553-26654-3)
Reviewed by Andrew Andrews

Not all fantasies are the same.

The *Unconquered Country* is "A Life History" about Third Child and her harrowing experience in the undefeatable land, the Unconquered Country, about her life in the city of Saprang Song, about her holding on to dignity in the face of despair.

Cast in a fable, endeared with a view from the eyes of a child brought up in the horrors of war, in a place torn of all its beauty, *The Unconquered Country* examines the incomprehensible disease of war. After the Neighbors invade, after Sharks attack from the skies, burning all the land, her family and her village, there is only a dim, fading hope left in Third's mind. The journey she takes of physical and emotional survival is not easily taken, and not taken alone.

Ryman, who has been through encompassing experiences such as those seen by Third, understands. His novel (expanded from the British Fantasy and World Fantasy award-winning novella that appeared in *Interzone* as well as in book form from Unwin Paperbacks) never exploits; it only tears open our minds so we can fully comprehend and, by comparison, prevent.

The Unconquered Country is a war novel told through the eyes of experience and pain. It is both riveting and majestic.

THE GREY HORSE by R.A. MacAvoy (Bantam Books, 247 pages., \$3.95) (ISBN 0-553-28557-1)
Reviewed by Debra L. McBride

As with her previous novel, *The Book of Kells*, R.A. MacAvoy once again weaves a delightful spell of Irish magic in *The Grey Horse*. Set during the mid-19th century, when English landlords were displacing a multitude of Irish families from their homes, this enchanted tale shows how the appearance of a strange gray stallion spells salvation for the town of Carraro.

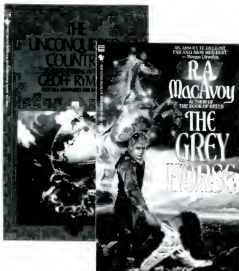
The stallion in question is indeed a horse of a different color: he is a puca, a shape-changing faerie by the name of Ruairi MacEibhir, who comes into the mortal world for the sole purpose of winning the heart of the woman he loves. Ruairi ends up putting a bit of magic into the lives of all he touches:

Schweitzer (continued from page 15)

Sure it's a familiar plot, as old as Edgar Rice Burroughs' "The Resurrection of Jimer Jaw," but never before on screen has it been handled with such intelligence and sensitivity. This movie differs from dozens of other resurrected-caveman epics in that it is able to recognize the humanity of the Neanderthal, who, while he may get no grades for good looks, is not a grunting brute at all, but a brave and responsible man on an important mission.

The true tragedy of the film's climax is that the only way this man can avoid a life of being penned up like a brute is by dying to complete his mission. You see, 40,000 years ago the climate changed and the Neanderthal's tribe was dying. He, the tribal shaman, went out on a vision-quest, so that the gods would reveal to him what was to be done. Perhaps he expected to sacrifice himself for the good of the tribe. In any case, he accidentally got frozen, and he interprets his entire reawakening as part of the supernatural experience to be expected on such a quest.

At the very end he's carried off into the sky by a helicopter --which he thinks is the



horse trainer Anrai O'Reachtaire (Henry Rattery, in English), who hires Ruairi on as a stable hand; parish priest Tadhg O'Murchu (Tim Murphy), an active nationalist of the Irish underground; English landlord James Blonfield and his son, Toby; and, of course, the object of Ruairi's desire, Maire Ni Standun (Mary Stanton).

MacAvoy paints vivid characterizations in this tale, bringing to life not only the people and landscapes, but also the feeling of the times--the tenseness and oppression of the townspeople. The author's use of Gaelic spellings and mannerisms of speech were extremely refreshing, enhancing the realism of the tale.

The Grey Horse was such a convincing blend of history and fantasy that upon reading it, one almost believes the story to be actual fact instead of a delightful piece of imagination. □

trickster bird that will take him to the gods—but loses his grip on the landing skids and falls to his death. At this point the important difference between futility and tragedy is demonstrated by a single facial expression.

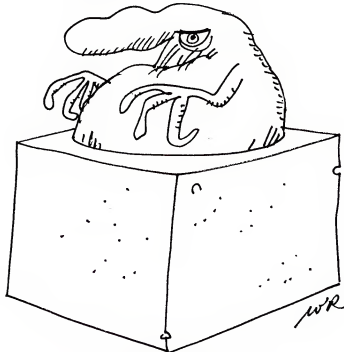
If this had merely been a story about a deluded Neanderthal who gets killed senselessly, if the expression on the actor's face had been one of despairing terror, then the whole thing would have been a throw-away, futility. But he has a look of triumph on his face as he falls, and he has fulfilled his mission. He has deliberately chosen this ending, as has the anthropologist who realizes that there is nothing better to be done. So the Iceman dies with dignity.

I'll leave a lump in your throat. I've seen few SF movies that are so genuinely moving. And I don't think you'll ever hear the Neil Young song "Heart of Gold" again without thinking of the scene in which the anthropologist and the Neanderthal finally make genuine contact with one another as fellow men by singing around the campfire.

Even if the Neanderthal doesn't have a very good singing voice. □

Counter-Thrusts

JUST PUSH ME, BOYS,
JUST PUSH ME—I CAN
MAKE IT YET—!



LETTERS

Michael Swanwick
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Philadelphia, PA 19128

Recent reviews of *Vacuum Flowers* in *THRUST* and *SCIENCE FICTION EYE* claim that I misapplied the term "wetware." This is a serious charge, since the concept of wetware is important to my novel, and I want to spike the notion before it spreads.

I don't have the book where I originally found the word, so I called the AI labs at MIT. They defined wetware as "neuronal nets or structures which participate in the processing of information in an organism." Which is how I used it. Wetware is not simply the protoplasmic equivalent of hardware, though it's often used that way.

I'm not sure what the reviewers thought it meant. One hinted—but this may have been meant as a joke—that it had something to do with biochips. I suppose its possible they've picked up the word for their own purposes. I wouldn't know. That's not what I was writing about.

[Steve Brown reviewed *Vacuum Flowers* in *THRUST* 26, and noted that the novel featured "the constant misuse of 'wetware' on almost every page." The issue here seems to be over which of three meanings for "wetware" is the right one. Michael's MIT AI researchers' definition is just a very fancy way of saying that wetware is simply the the

system of neural connections in an animal's central nervous system (i.e. its brain), which despite what Michael says, really is analogous to computer "hardware." Wetware, by that definition, is just the natural, biological information processing system that exists in every animal on Earth. The term has been used in some recent SF in approximately that meaning: as high-tech slang for a person's brain (as in "get your wetware working and figure a way out of this mess.") But that definition doesn't really make "wetware" a very unique or useful term, in my opinion, either in SF or AI research. Another definition of "wetware," and one that I greatly prefer, was first introduced (to the best of my knowledge) by Peter Preuss in his 1985 novel, *Human Error*. Preuss's story is about the development of bioengineered computer chips which grow and redevelop to better accomplish the tasks presented to them, so that the computers based on them get better, faster and more specialized through use. Preuss used "wetware" as the technical term for his DNA-based biochips, which were a novel and exciting new SF concept.

The use of "wetware" in Michael Swanwick's *Vacuum Flowers*, however, differed significantly from either of these two definitions. Michael's wetware was apparently some sort of carbon-based interactive read-only-memory cartridges which could be plugged into an implanted input port connected with a human brain, with the result

being that an artificial personality would be overlaid on the user's own personality. This may be an interesting concept, but there is no reason why this technology should be wet and carbon-based, as opposed to good old silicon-based, brain-interfaceable hardware—indeed, it would have been more plausible as such.

If we are to have only one meaning for the term wetware in SF, I vote for Peter Preuss's biochip over MIT's far more pedestrian definition, or Swanwick's interesting, but unlikely, personality overlay. Any other opinions? — DDF]

Alexis A. Gilliland
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Arlington, VA 22204

Browsing through *THRUST* 27 I find, at last, John Shirley's article on Genre-Transcendent Science Fiction, GTSF, and what we shall have to call Genre-Transcendent Convention Programming, which is clearly intended to convert the great unwashed into the True Faith. Now as it happens, I have attempted to write GTSF, with what results I will leave to others to determine. I have also been involved with programming conventions, and directing others to program them for me, so it is possible that my practical experience may help to illuminate John Shirley's theories.

First an anecdote. Running Disclave in the middle seventies, we made use of the publicly available NASA films, showing real sense-of-wonder space scenes. One particular film, the first approach shots of Jupiter, I found especially beautiful, and was disappointed that only a small handful of people got to see it. So I reordered it the next year, and showed it again, with a better time slot and more publicity. And the same result. Why? Because most people at the con weren't interested.

Disclave programming also tapped into the Washington scientific community for Saturday's opening speaker, featuring a top climatologist, a real space lawyer, a bogus German rocket scientist, a marine biologist and others. The theory was that we started on a high plane and it was all down hill from there. Because of that joke, and because it was one item, the audience tolerated it with passably good grace. Actually we did quite a lot of original programming, and some of it was excellent (One panel that played very well in 1981 was composed of an author, an editor, an artist, a librarian and a book dealer. This idea was never picked up by other cons for some reason, possibly due to the prejudice against having fans and pros on the same panel.) What happened, of course, was that any good original program ideas were borrowed by other conventions, and quickly became old hat.

So "We need more than seriousness—we need freshness" do we? Lots of luck. Anything serious that plays well is going to have the freshness wrung out of it by frequent repetition in short order. And anything serious that doesn't play well is bad programming. Also, calling a given panel "serious but not stodgy" won't convince the audience; good intentions are not enough, you have to deliver in real time to those specific people in that particular room. It doesn't matter how beautiful NASA's approach shots of Jupiter are, if it doesn't draw an audience, the con chair has an

WOW! I GET TO CHAIR THE
WAFF PANEL! BNFHOOD AT
LAST!



obligation to find something that does. Is this pandering to the audience? No, this is giving value to the people who paid money to come to the convention. Experience is how the head of programming learns what works and what doesn't, just as experience is how the fans decide which conventions they'll go back to and which ones they won't.

Which brings me around to another point; the program chairman also is constrained by the talent available. Science fiction conventions routinely get the "free" (registration plus a couple of drinks) services of science fiction professionals, who ad lib on familiar topics. A competent stand-up comedian who isn't a big name gets paid \$200 for a fifty minute set. There is truly no limit on what you can pay for entertainment, and the cost must necessarily be passed on to the customer. If the con wants something extraordinary and difficult from the pros providing the service at essentially no charge, how much extra is it prepared to pay?

The final point is: what do we need programming for, anyway? Why not put up a selection of mimes, jugglers, and belly dancers instead? This is an open-ended question that can be hashed over forever. When I was young and foolish I thought that programming talked about important and interesting things, and was shocked to learn that some people thought that it was a way to kill time until these parties opened. On mature reflection I would say that the program is what defines the audience, the people who come to the convention. Fandom has many manors, and if you have Leonard Nimoy as your Goh (with the appropriate ensemble of pros on the program) you will attract a very different audience from what Joe Haldeman would draw. And Joe Haldeman in turn would draw a different group than Stephen King.

By defining the convention as a literary gathering devoted to science fiction, the program initially serves as a self-screening device to keep out undesirables such as

non-readers and lawyers. The other function of the program is to provide the steady influx of newcomers (needed to keep up fandom's numerical strength) with something to do until they have a chance to get acquainted. Remember that the usual set of generic panels will be stimulating and exciting to fresh ears; there is no such thing as stale material, only a stale audience.

This is not to say that the quest for a Genre Transcendent track of programming is unreasonable. It has, in fact, the strongest historical precedent. The earliest divisions in the history of science fiction fandom were between those who thought science fiction could save the world and those who just wanted to have a good time. In that event, reality demolished the idealists. As a result nobody today can seriously maintain that science fiction will make a real difference in the real world. Not the reading of it, and not the writing of it, and certainly not the celebration of it.

Robert Bloch
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Los Angeles, CA 90046

THRUST 27 is on the money—but speaking of money reminds me of John Shirley's convention proposals. I have no quarrel with his opinions, but I take a guarded view of his economics. Most SF conventions cater to popular taste because it's necessary in order to finance the costs of hotel meeting rooms, etc. I rather doubt if Mr. Shirley's program would attract the necessary paying attendance.

[Small meetings can be economically viable, if the right hotel facility is chosen, one willing to provide meeting rooms for little or no cost in order to have hotel guest rooms filled. However, such a small convention could not afford to pay travel costs for the featured guests; that's an area where convention costs can really soar. —DDF]

Pete Rogan, Editor
STARDATE Magazine
Reluctant Publishing, Ltd.
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Ulica, MI 48067

David Bischoff's "Essaying" column in your Spring, 1987 issue, on the demise of STARDATE MAGAZINE, interested me greatly. He presented a portion of the STARDATE story I hadn't heard before, from his unique viewpoint as the magazine's editor.

I'd like to return the favor, if I might, to him and your readers. I am the editor of the new STARDATE MAGAZINE, published this year by my company, Reluctant Publishing, Ltd. The magazine is doing fine; our second issue is on the stands, the third one is being typeset, and we have plans for the next year for its general content. We expect to do quite well by it.

Mr. Bischoff seems to have enjoyed himself as STARDATE'S editor, but his piece did not adequately explain why the magazine went under after only three issues, beyond the inadequate financing of Associates International, Inc., and its owner, Mr. LaMott Dupont Copeland, who, according to Mr. Bischoff, had access to only "... a mere few million a year." Why this sum was not

enough, or what became of the money spent, he does not say. His article, on the other hand, intentionally or not, is quite revealing.

First of all, he was hired third-hand. Ted White, who had been approached by Mr. Dana Lombardy, who had been given the go-ahead by Mr. Copeland, made the pitch to Mr. Bischoff. He was told he was to be the editor of a glossy science-fiction magazine that has Star Trek "elements." This description was highly erroneous. STARDATE was a highly specialized hobby publication catering to a small but avid readership in the gaming hobby. It was sold only to those stores that also sold the games of its founding and then-parent company, FASA Corporation, because that's the only market it had.

Somebody — possibly Mr. Lombardy — convinced everyone around him that STARDATE could be converted into a science-fiction short-story vehicle. Including Mr. Bischoff, who found himself willy-nilly projected into the role of editor in charge of total content, along with Ted White. Mr. Bischoff admits his editorial experience was limited, and admits that he was shown to an office and left to fend for himself. He had to watch others to learn what they were doing, and soon found that he had been hired for his contacts—"Dana and company knew how to put together a magazine, but not a science-fiction magazine" Ted White was allowed apparently for creative control. So, in essence, Dana Lombardy, who didn't know how to put the magazine together, hired someone else who didn't know how to put the magazine together, to put the magazine together. The wonder of this system is that it didn't come unglued sooner.

Mr. Bischoff enjoyed an extraordinary range of help in his course of employment. He had a helpful and friendly staff, from the art director, his assistant editor, his office manager, to the ad people and Dana Lombardy. "[I]n other words, the people who, along with their associates, did the hard work." In fact, from the mastheads of the magazines Associates International published, there were no less than twelve people working in his office, counting himself, all with salaries to be paid. By way of comparison, the WASHINGTON JOURNALISM REVIEW has a staff of thirteen. The WASHINGTON JOURNALISM REVIEW also has a circulation of 1.5 million. STARDATE, under Associates International, never had a circulation of more than 9000. Mr. Bischoff also mourns the loss of his expense account, which, I suppose, like his staff, had to be paid from somewhere.

In six months, Mr. Bischoff says he learned a great deal about the magazine business. He does not say if he ever learned that STARDATE was only being distributed to the game stores it had always sold to, and not to newsstands, not to mainstream magazine distributors, or to any major bookstores. He seems not to have noticed that his grand experiment in "multi-media science-fiction" was only confounding and confusing a handful of gamers who expected ready-to-play gaming stuff, not articles on Max Headroom. Whatever Mr. Bischoff learned, it was not that his venture was doomed and sinking fast. Nor that nothing was being done to save it. Mr. Bischoff cannot be blamed for this; judging from his article, no one from Mr. Copeland on down ever gave any sign that the magazine was in trouble. Mr. Bischoff merely failed to learn this on his own.

Like Mr. Bischoff, I was taken by surprise when the magazine closed down, still owing me money. I was also outraged, since I felt that STARDATE had a future in the gaming field and should never have tried to become a combination of OMNI, HEAVY METAL and STARLOG in one shot. I was not alone, and not long after STARDATE closed down under Associates, my own company was formed to pursue and eventually acquire the rights to publish STARDATE under the Reluctant banner. We do not publish more than one fiction piece a month, and that one must be gaming oriented. We have no comics. We are a straightforward gaming publication with a known and hungry audience, a small and manageable staff, and very modest controlled costs. It is not our intention to cause STARDATE to fold its tents again.

I'm very happy for Mr. Bischoff that he found being an editor such a rewarding and broadening experience. It's a pity that it was not, as well, a successful one. I do not know, at this late date, whether or not he has been paid by Associates for his time. I would advise him to call Associates' Reports division in Delaware, at (302) 656-2209, and talk to Mr. Dave Smith about it, if he has not already done so. They can be dealt with, if called every half hour.

Dave Bischoff Replies:

At the time I wrote my piece on STARDATE that was printed in THRUST 26, I had not yet heard that FASA had sold the magazine, and the additional information on that from Mr. Rogan is very interesting. I am uncertain, however, about his intent in the rest of the letter. It sounds vaguely hostile.

A few glaring errors exist in the letter (beyond the general surliness). The staff that produced STARDATE also produced the monthly magazine, GAME NEWS, and worked on CERAMIC SCOPE, and there were also "Special Projects." We also did HUMOR NEWS for a couple of issues, and many of us, like me, were part-time. The staff did far more than just produce the 4 issues of STARDATE.

As for why the magazine died, I believe that I explained that quite adequately in my column. I emphatically believe that if we had had the proper support and funding, we would have been a thriving magazine after another year or two under our editorial policies--a new direction, I might add, with which FASA was in full agreement. We were certainly not the only branch of its business pruned by Associates International.

The magazine indeed WAS distributed to newstands, as well as to SF specialty shops that did not sell it before. We also had a contract with Waldenbooks that would have taken effect with the issue at press when we got the rug yanked. Mr. Rogan seems to be implying that the magazine failed because of its editorial content. My only reply to that is that it didn't have TIME to fail on that count.

I wish Mr. Rogan and the new STARDATE all the best with their efforts. I look forward to reading the issues produced by Reluctant. But I think our 4 issues greatly enhanced FASA's--and SF GAMING's--cause rather than hindering them.

[Dave appears to be too shy to mention that, to the best of my knowledge, Associates International owes significant amounts of money to him and several other former STARDATE staff members, several of whom

are, like Dave, associated with THRUST. (They even owe me \$120 for a column I did that never saw print.) Only one of us has gotten paid, and that was on threat of legal action. I, for one, haven't time to deal with them by calling every half hour. Do they owe money to anyone else? Maybe THRUST should act as a clearinghouse for information on this situation....--DDF]

Joe Mayhew
5800 Annapolis Rd. Apt. 105
Bladensburg, MD 20710

John Shirley's "Make It Scream" (THRUST 27) is a romp with all the exuberance and adolescent righteousness of a high school debate. It was fun to read and doubtless fun to write, though a little smug.

"Cyberpunk" is not quite as special as Mr. Shirley seems to think. It has been applied to some refreshing writing as well as to some hackneyed dross. Like any other buzz-word, it breeds fad junk. No subject matter or style automatically confers transcendence. It is still the telling that makes the tale. The genius of literature thrives by prodding the soul, not by petting the ego. Precision of language, depth of feeling, breadth of understanding disciplined into solid language makes for fine writing, not any fashionable pose. Trends may win critical praise, but they do not assure grace.

Mr. Shirley, assuming a cutsize brusqueness, announces he is addressing himself to the readers of "GTSF" (literate SF) and not to "GSF" (pulp). Do many "GSF" fans read THRUST? If not, he is simply flattering his reader's ego with a feeling of superiority to genre hol polloi. It is as if to say, "we neat guys belong to the right gang." I think that weakens his argument.

Much of what he says about con programming is founded in pathetic reality. There are cons which seem to have little to do with SF literature of any sort, and which seem narcissistic and illiterate. Fortunately, as Mr. Shirley points out, this is not the case with all cons, or all programming at cons. Those attending even the most book-and-reader-oriented conventions are not always part of the appropriate audience. Twits with fetish accents, capes and bizarre problems stand out in any crowd. The loudest pup is not usually the best of the kennel, and as the fan chauvinist who yaps about he "mundane" doesn't necessarily represent the typical con attendee.

But convention-attending fans are a rather small part of SF's readership. Perhaps they are significant to the trade because they actually care who wrote the books, and hope for something better from time to time. Most of the SF market consumes it like popcorn without much concern for the label. Con fans are also unusual in that they respect SF writers. The wide world has no more regard for writers than SF readers. Where but at a con could a writer with two published short stories be treated as a professional, as a serious artist?

Programming at cons is often narcissistic, redundant twaddle. While Cons aren't supposed to be academic seminars, the fans might attend more of the program if it weren't so often shoddily put together. But even the most inspired topics can be ruined by a panel consisting of half-drunken, hostile, pretentious, or unprepared panelists. By

That is
the
worst
sentence
I have
ever
seen!!



contrast, even a mediocre subject, given the right participants, might turn out brilliantly. "What is it about fans and their cats?" might lead nicely into a discussion of how mediocre hacks exploit the appetite for trite piffle by flattering their baser fantasies. Or it might be a successful tribal storytelling session by people who like to tell cat stories. Cons are, after all, run by fans for fans and it is natural that things of fanish interest (the fans themselves) will emerge now and then. I am planning the programming for DISCLAVE '88 and intend to focus it on the publishers: Do they have any artistic goals? Why do they publish which new authors? What creative risks do they take, and so on. If Mr. Shirley has any suggestions he'd care to pass on to me, I'd welcome them.

Jessica Amanda Salmonson
Post Office Box 20610
Seattle, WA 98102

John Shirley's reference to "Cyberpunk and Humanist SF" gave me a rise. Humanist? Humanism is "a devotion to the humanities" or "polite learning" or "a system of thought in

which human interests predominate" or a specific philosophical movement of the Renaissance. It is also, rarely, "literary culture." These are the real definitions. Since he uses a capital H, I presume he means capital H, Humanist SF being about Renaissance scholars. I will most assuredly be looking for John's next book about Renaissance scholars. I thought perhaps he meant humanitarian SF, but that would be just as dorky. To be serious about this, I presume John meant a type of science fiction with greater human regard (such as George Martin or Michael Bishop have been known to write) but this certainly isn't what Cyberpunk does, which in its most successful manifestation (re: Gibson) is a more fashion-conscious, decadent form of adventure for adventure's sake, and quite nice. The only hard science fiction writer with greater human regard, that I can think of off hand, is Fred Pohl. When I stopped reading much science fiction, I still read Pohl. It was Gibson who made me want to read science fiction again (to spice my usual diet of fantasy and horror) and I love his obsessions because I share many of them (including an interest in Japanese classicism) but being turned into a computerized superhero is hardly becoming more "human" in orientation. What I've read of John Shirley (and I've not seen his most recent work) has a political acumen and a decadence I enjoy; again, though, it doesn't one-up whatever "humane" scope can be found in Scott Card or Heinlein whose political leanings are directly opposed to mine or John's, but still human.

As to alternative conventions, they're around. World Fantasy Con, ReaderCon, and a new science fiction oriented convention patterned after WFC that I've not been to, but I hear the first one was a big success, and academic conventions like the Conference on the Fantastic; some of these have exactly what John (and I as well) seems to want. I rarely attend conventions in part because they are not book oriented. But book-oriented conventions exist, though not on every doorstep where dork-ass conventions are. The best con is a trip to Manhattan--any time at all.

Singularly humorless, am I? Tell Darrell to put a fire cracker up his whazoo and light it. Hooahahahahaha! Now ain't that a funnier idea than cyberprep? Ya you betcha.

Bernadette Bosky
819 West Markham Avenue
Durham, NC 27701

I am writing in response to THRUST 26, especially the letter by Jessica Amanda Salmonson.

While I wasn't at the World Fantasy Con that Ms. Salmonson mentions (more's the pity), I have been in on the cyberprep activity elsewhere, notably at Disclave, and I don't think it's a sign of cyberpunk-bashing, or anything of the sort. I think there is a joke there, and I think it is funny. Well, I don't respect people who say "you don't understand" but make no effort to explain what it is the listener has misunderstood: what's the humor in that Ms. Salmonson missed? Since William Gibson was inducted into cyberprep at Disclave 1986, this is all a tempest in a pisspot anyway, but some of the analysis might be worthwhile.

The humor, when I think about it, seems to

be that while "punk" and "prep" are in many ways totally valid substitutes for each other, values and attitudes within the (SF) community make the exchange seem incongruous, hence funny. Punk and prep are both sets of beliefs, biases, fashions--neither is necessarily any more "real" or "valuable" than the other. But we think of punk as inherently real and honest and vital, while prep strikes us as inherently artificial and trivial and useless, so the exchange strikes us as ironic.

The reason why the joke has spread so, I think, is that behind the humor, "cyberprep" carries a valuable message: cyberpunk is, despite much of its (seeming) political agenda and change-the-world pride, no more inherently wonderful than cyberprep would be. Some cyberpunk rhetoric (not all of the rhetoric, and virtually never the fiction itself) insists we elevate lifestyle to dogma, fashion to her ultimate test of whether we are culturally "online" or not. But there's always more than one way to synthesize a hyper-contemporary input. When cyberpunk is seen as the definition of "hip" (itself a gloriously outdated phrase) rather than one way to approach it, style has replaced substance--and what's more stylish than cyberprep? To me, at least, cyberprep doesn't "attack" cyberpunk or even necessarily trivialize it; it does call for a certain perspective that admires the fiction for what it does and can do, but doesn't make it the summum bonum of what's happening in science fiction.

Like a number of people I know, I am delighted by the mirrorshades fiction, which I find new, exciting, and potentially valuable, but am wary and critical of the excesses of cyberpunk rhetoric. (Shirley and Sterling, especially, have become intoxicated by what Guyatt Spivak calls "the euphoria of the word," and need to deconstruct their own rhetoric--to see that mirrorshades or not, it's all done with mirrors, after all.) For that reason, I think "cyberprep" is just the nice little device for distancing and de-mythologizing we all need right now--those writing manifestos and agitprop for cyberpunk even more so its adversaries.

I'm sure some do use cyberprep as a way to trivialize cyberpunk: prep is a lifestyle SF people are no more likely to belong to than punk, but which most will find less threatening. But while that trivialization can occur, it ain't necessarily so. One thing the current "revolution" in SF has over the New Wave/Old Wave/Permanent Wave dash years is that people seem to have developed a sense of humor about the whole thing that not many people had then. Well, most people have developed it, anyway. I'm all for it--and, hence, all for cyberprep. I never took a cyberprep name, despite being inducted (vicariously) at the 1986 Disclave, but a name signifying my dual cyberprep and cyberpunk sympathies just occurred to me. With due apologies, I wonder if "Chip" has been taken. [Well, OK--maybe this should be the last word on cyberprep. I continue to be surprised that with even minor, humorous movements in SF fandom, if you dig below the surface, you find extensive intellectualizations behind them! Isn't fandom amazing? --DDF]

Frederick Fowler
1335-E, North Cliff Valley Way, N.E.
Atlanta, Georgia 30309

Once again we have science fiction as a cause. John Shirley is rallying around the flag, telling everyone about good SF, which he calls genre-transcendent SF (GTSF). But Shirley never clearly tells us what he means by GTSF. All of these fine, rolling phrases such as "adult concerns", "the human condition", and "our role in the universe", don't really tell me much about the kinds of writing that he is trying to describe. The list of writers that he gives doesn't help at all. What quality is common to the works of C. S. Lewis and those of Joanna Russ, so that we can call them both "genre-transcendent SF"? The possibility that there is no quality common to all of the authors he puts among the GTSF writers never enters his head.

Consider the words "genre-transcendent SF". Translating the impressive but vague word "transcendent", we have "SF that goes beyond the bounds of genre SF". But what is "genre SF"? Why, that is SF that is not GTSF, for the descriptions of GTSF that are given don't really describe.

My reading ranges from the nineteenth century English novel, to the Lake Poets, to Boswell and Milton, and the SF that I enjoy the most, and return to most often, is found in both of Shirley's categories. Jack Vance is one of my favorite SF authors, so is Walter Miller. I even like Jerry Pournelle. So now, I suppose, the answer will be that he meant the people who read "the best modern literature". Which means the people whose canon of taste is the narrowest in the history of literature.

Harry Lawton
882 Boynton Rd.
Philadelphia, PA 19118

The Bishop column in 26 about the Shirley-Card wars in SFWA nicely complemented the Shirley column in 25. They also rang a little bell, so I went hunting through my pile of old zines and found EMPIRE 19 in which John Shirley thumbed his nose at SF--its editors, writers and readers --and departed for the outside world where, he grandiosely declared, he would write "only mainstream trade and mainstream fantasy hereafter, and maybe a horror or two." He had (so he said) a record contract and had "just sold two mainstream novels to Avon and four scripts elsewhere." He signed off endearingly: "Rest in peace, kids."

But now Shirley's back. Where are all those hit records and big-selling mainstream novels and fantasies and hit movies? How about any records, any novels, any movies? How'd I miss them? Or is it true that the only writing jobs he could get were hack series novels under house names? And so now he's back to purify all of SF and straighten out the Nebula process in the bargain? This guy is an arrogant, condescending, elitist loser. That's spelled L-O-S-E-R. The only thing he's good at is self-promotion. Look at all the valuable space in THRUST that's been wasted promoting him. Let him go back to the great outside and show us all once more how to "transcend mediocrity and commercialism and write stuff that not only sells but explores."

John Shirley Replies:

It's true that I rather prematurely declared my abandonment of the SF field in EMPIRE,

years ago. Most everyone of quality does this foolish thing at some point. Robert Silverberg, Moorcock, lots of others. But the unique appeal of SF always lures one back.

Mr. Lawton, you have forced me to set aside my usual--ahem--modesty, in order to explain to you that you are quite mistaken.

Evidently you have not kept up on SF. Perhaps you only go to "sci-fi" movies. If you were hip to the field you would know that I've published lots of novels, since those days, in SF. And if you were aware of the publishing scene you'd know I published (or sold for film production) a great deal outside of SF--under my own name.

After my silly, loud mouthed withdrawal from SF in EMPIRE, I published *The Brigade* (a mainstream novel) and *Cellars* a thriller at Avon. Both of these books came out in British editions. *Cellars* paid me some very decent royalties and was critically praised. I also wrote film scripts, and recorded an album on Celluloid records. Other artists on Celluloid are Golden Palominos and Africa Bambaata. I toured in Europe, where my LP was widely reviewed. I was interviewed on ten European radio stations (have also been widely radio interviewed in the USA). The LP only had limited release here because I fought with the company and my band broke up. It wouldn't have been a hit anyway--I never claimed to be out to make hit records. It was pretty oddball stuff, but professional. I also had singles out on Park Avenue Records for a punk band I was in. Got some American on college stations mostly. Did what I set out to do, but then I had to quit because I started siring kids and had to write much more to support them. . . I have never had to hold a job though, because I always had money from writing and music. It's been that way, anyhow, eight or nine years now. Last two years I did quite well indeed, Mr. Lawton... I returned to SF publishing some time ago. My SF novel *Eclipse*, published in a trade edition by Bluejay books, received very enthusiastic reviews in the WASHINGTON POST, ANALOG, SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE, the NY DAILY NEWS, and elsewhere. It was praised also by William Gibson, Michael Swanwick, Bruce Sterling, Norman Spinrad, Ed Bryant, and other established names. The *Mirrorshades* anthology, which appeared on the NY TIMES recommended summer reading list and is in its third printing, was widely reviewed, and my contribution--an excerpt from *Eclipse*--was consistently picked out as being among the best items in the book. *Eclipse* will be coming out this fall in a Warner mass market edition, and Warner will publish its two sequels *Eclipse Penumbra* and *Total Eclipse*, which are already completed. My novel *A Splendid Chaos* will be brought out by Franklin Watts next winter, in hardcover. New American Library will be publishing my new thriller, *In Darkness Waiting* late this year. I'm now working on a novel called *Something Real*, a mainstream novel about corruption and drug dealing in the record industry. I've sold four screenplays, and one of them, "Black Glass", will be filmed in the Fall; tentatively, Steve Buscemi (from *Parting Glances*) and Whoopi Goldberg have agreed to be in it. We'll see if they actually sign the contracts. I'm collaborating with William Gibson on a screenplay called "Macrochip", which Lorimar is interested in, and another major too, but I can't talk any more about that at this point because my agent (for

THRUST

BACK ISSUES

Issue 5 (Spring 1974). Roger Zelazny, Fred Pohl, Chris Lampton, Dave Bischoff, Michael Moorcock.

Issue 8 (Spring 1977). Ted White, Doug Fratz, David Bischoff, Matt Howarth, Chris Lampton.

Issue 9 (Fall 1977). Norman Spinrad, Ted White, Chris Lampton, Charles Sheffield, Darrell Schweitzer, Ted White, Doug Fratz, Steve Stiles, Dan Steffan, David Bischoff.

Issue 10 (Spring 1978). Isaac Asimov, Kirby McCauley, Henry Morrison, Charles Sheffield, Derek Carter, Ted White, David Bischoff, Lou Stathis, Steve Miller.

Issue 11 (Fall 1978). Theodore Sturgeon, Joe Haldeman, C.J. Cherryh, Ted White, Charles Sheffield, David Bischoff, John Shirley, Lou Stathis.

Issue 12 (Summer 1979). Fred Saberhagen, Octavia Butler, Ted White, Charles Sheffield, David Bischoff, Michael Bishop, John Shirley, Jessica Salmonson; Chris Lampton, Dan Steffan.

Issue 13 (Fall 1979). David Gerrold, Alexei Panshin, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Ted White, Michael Bishop, Charles Sheffield, John Shirley, Dan Steffan, David Nalle, Steve Brown.

Issue 14 (Winter 1980). J.G. Ballard, Barry Malzberg, Ted White, Michael Bishop, Charles Sheffield, David Bischoff, John Shirley.

Issue 15 (Summer 1980). Gardner Dozois, Frank Kelly Freas, Michael Bishop, George Alec Effinger, Charles Sheffield, Dan Steffan, Ted White, David Nalle.

Issue 16 (Fall 1980). Joan D. Vinge, Michael Bishop, Ted White, David Bischoff, John Shirley, Mark McGarry,

Jessica Amanda Salmonson, David Nalle.

Issue 17 (Summer 1981). Raymond Gallun, Michael Bishop, Charles Sheffield, George Alec Effinger, Lou Stathis. **Issue 18** (Spring 1982). Gregory Benford, Somtow Sucharitkul, D.G. Compton, Charles Sheffield, Rich Brown, Mike Conner, Grant Carrington, James Wilson. **Issue 19** (Spring 1983). Gene Wolfe, Thomas Disch, Gardner Dozois, Charles Sheffield, George Alec Effinger.

Issue 20 (Summer 1984). Michael Bishop, Jack Chalker, Charles D. Hornig, Terence Green, Gregory Feeley, Robert Sabella. **Issue 21** (Winter 1985). Jack Dann, Larry Niven, Ted White, Darrell Schweitzer, Doug Fratz.

Issue 22 (Summer 1985). Al Sarrantonio, Philip Jose Farmer, Alexis Gilliland, Michael Bishop, Janrae Frank, Darrell Schweitzer.

Issue 23 (Winter 1986). Ben Bova, Sharon Webb, Jane Yolen, Michael Bishop, Marvin Kaye, Darrell Schweitzer, Doug Fratz.

Issue 24 (Summer 1986). David Brin, Sterling E. Lanier, Marvin Kaye, Darrell Schweitzer, Doug Fratz, Janrae Frank, Pascal Thomas.

Issue 25 (Winter 1986). Piers Anthony, Michael Bishop, John Shirley, Charles Platt, Darrell Schweitzer, Marvin Kaye. **Issue 26** (Spring 1987). Stephen R. Donaldson, Nancy Kress, Michael Bishop, Charles Sheffield, Charles Platt, David Bischoff, Darrell Schweitzer.

Issue 27 (Summer 1987). Michael Bishop, Greg Bear, Richard E. Geis, John Shirley, Gregory Benford, Marvin Kaye.

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movies--Marty Shapiro, also Bill's agent) would have a shit-fit. My short stories--which never fail, Mr. Lawton, to garner at least a double handful of Nebula nominations--have appeared in OMNI, OUI, THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, and ISAAC ASIMOV'S. Also in half a dozen original anthologies, such as *Universe* and *New Dimensions*. I haven't made *The Year's Best SF* yet, but I've been in the honorable mentions, and I'm working on it. I have been in the *Year's Best Fantasy* collection. We're negotiating with a publisher now on my first collection of short stories. I've been translated into French, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, German and most of my books have appeared in British editions.

Interviews with your humble servant have appeared in *SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW*, and *INTERZONE*, and in the *NY DAILY NEWS*.

Do I have to go on? I could, Mr. Lawton... Come back to the real world, Mr. Lawton. Your family is worried about you. You've been out of it far too long.

Ann Morris
12524 Lovers Lane
Riverview, Florida 33569

I was prompted to write this letter because I am tired of letters and reviews which degenerate into mudslinging. Not only do I see this in *THRUST* but in other "semi-prozines" as well. While it may be titillating to be "in" on the feuds going on between "cyberpreppies" and "cyberpunks" and to see professional authors calling each other names, it is not worthy of an intelligent readership. What people say, and in what way they say it, in their personal conversations is not always fit for print. I see a lot of uncharitable "people attacks", which would be better left in personal and private exchanges, in the pages of magazines which profess to have high intellectual standards. Sure, "inquiring minds want to know," but they can

find that type of knowledge in the scandal sheets which tell them why Sylvester Stallone is getting divorced from the alien woman who gave birth to a sheep while on a macrobiotic diet.

Certainly it is an idealistic viewpoint from which I speak and even I don't refrain from unkind observations at times. However, I do not send them to editors to have them appear in the review and letter columns. What is needed here is some common sense and respect for others. I am not saying everything should be sweetness and light. I don't want my blood sugar level elevated anymore than anyone else does. Controversy and argument make interesting reading but they can be written in a more humane way than they often have been lately. There is no place in a magazine which aspires to becoming "professional" for nasty comments on people's physical attributes or for crude suggestions for things they can do to themselves. (I have seen both of these things in this magazine in the past few issues.) Attack a person's ideas, opinions, or work, but not the person. Those of us who read the letters and reviews deserve better.

[There's always been a dichotomy between those fans who want fandom to be a nice place to visit, with intellectual banter and good humor all around, and those who want it to be a microcosm of (or even a substitute for) the real world, where arguments and controversies abound, and can get very nasty. I usually tend to lean towards the former



EDITORIAL (continued from 4)

Dreams" will get the traditional-SF-reader vote and win the Hugo (as it did the LOCUS Poll). My favorite, Kim Stanley Robinson's "Down and Out in the Year 2000", didn't even make the ballot, although it did take 2nd in the LOCUS Poll.

For best non-fiction book, Aldiss and Wingrove's *Trillion Year Spree* is a lock, as *Allens* for best dramatic presentation. Dave Langford could win two Hugos on his home turf, for best fan writer and best fanzine (ANSIBLE). Arthur (ATom) Thompson, also on home turf, should win the fan artist award. For best editor, there is a broad ballot of nominees this year, in a category formerly dominated by magazine editors. I predict that the late Terry Carr will get a well-deserved award, with Gardner Dozois a somewhat close 2nd. (Next year, based on his phenomenal work on *ISAFM* this year, Dozois should be a clear winner.) I have no opinions of note on the pro artist award or John W. Campbell Award, although Karen Joy Fowler might be the best choice for the latter.

As yes, last but not least, best semi-prozine, *THRUST*, as you might have noticed, was not nominated again this year.

(This despite the fact that I have received at least 20 letters in the past year opining that "one day I'm sure *THRUST* will get the Hugo nominations it deserves." (Obviously, all those letters came from non-Hugo-nominators.) But you may also have noticed that 2 of 5 nominees (*SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW* and *FANTASY REVIEW*) are now defunct. Will this leave room for both *THRUST* and *SF EYE* to make the ballot next year? Will enough fans nominate us, or will "No Award" prevail? *THRUST*'s only Hugo nomination was back in 1980; after all these years, I feel overdue.

As for this year's Hugo, the question is whether the British vote for *INTERZONE* can unseat temporarily the perennial winner, *LOCUS*.

Coming Attractions: In *THRUST* 29 we'll have an interview with Hal Clement, John Shirley announcing (and publishing) the winners of his Alternative Convention Programming Contest, and article by Ardash Mayhar on the decline of recent SF and fantasy. Marvin Kaye's 6th article on immortality, and (I sincerely hope) several of our other revered columnists--to be published in December 1987.

thinking myself, although I must admit to having secretly enjoyed a good fight in print on occasion, including some featured in *THRUST* over the years. But simple name-calling can get boring, and I don't intend to let any discussions in *THRUST* sink to that level.

(By the way, in case you think that Ann may be over-reacting, based on the letters you've read in *THRUST*, remember that Ann is an assistant editor and often sees the parts of letters that I edit out!) --DDF

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